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Sigurd Lewerentz and the Dilemma of the Classical

Colin St. John Wilson

Between the portico and the body of Sigurd Lewerentz' Chapel of the Resurrection, there is a caesura; furthermore, the portico is not quite parallel to the Chapel, so that the gap between varies as if a wedge had been driven between the two. I know of no precedent for either the disengagement or the skew. But they are not the only equivocal elements in this design; so much so that we might say that the intense conviction of the "classical" language used here is challenged in equal measure by the extent to which that language is subverted.

Between the completion of that Chapel in 1925 and the Church of St. Peter at Klippan, built in 1966, there lies another kind of gap – a revision of language so stark as to be without parallel, a language of extreme Schinkelesque refinement abandoned in favor of a prohibitive reduction of means.

Lewerentz was a man of few words and certainly not given to propounding theory or offering an explanation for the nature of his work. All that he had to say was said through building. Nevertheless, it is clear that he was an architect who had the strange gift of making what appeared to be simple concrete acts of construction – how a beam straddles a column, how a sheet of glass sits in a brick wall – carry a double meaning. "Architecture," wrote Wittgenstein, "is a gesture." For Lewerentz, it is as if our footsteps echo in another world, and as if every gesture we make in constructing the physical tectonic reality could be seen as a test-case for the claim by Adrian Stokes that "architectural forms are a language confined to the joining of a few ideographs of immense ramification" (ideographs, be it noted, that are not tied to any stylistic grammar).

The enigma of Lewerentz' architecture takes on an unexpected topicality in our time. Why did this man, who was the most poetic master of the classical language of architecture in this century, turn his back on that language?

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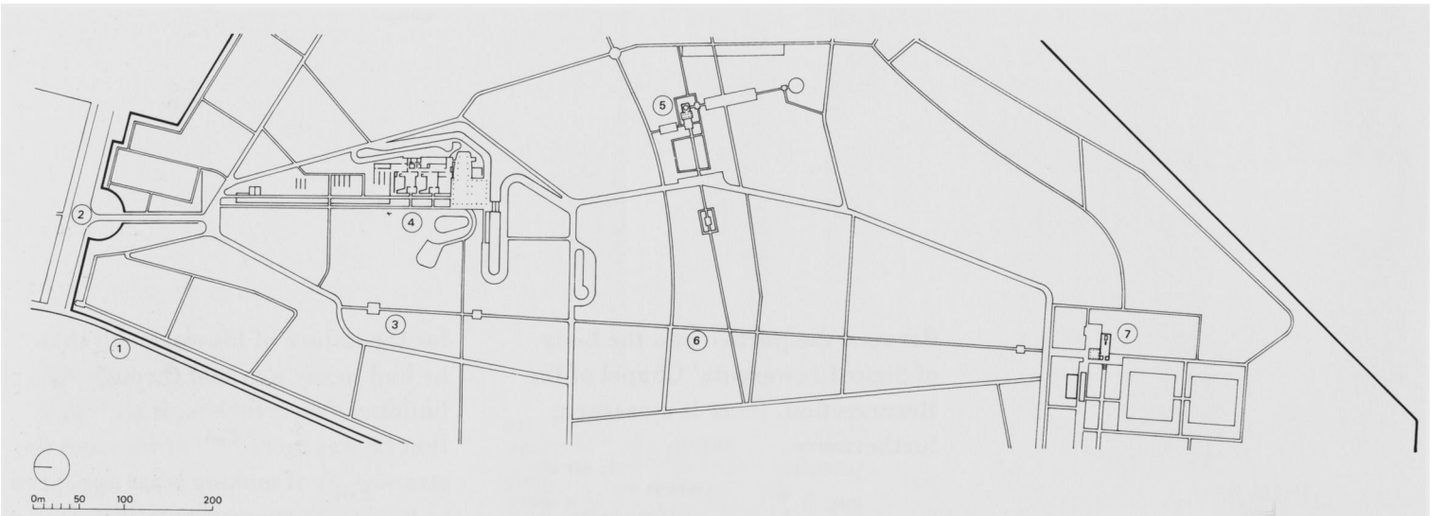

Key for Site Plan, Woodland Cemetery.

1. Railway Station.
2. North Entrance to Woodland Cemetery.
3. Grove of Remembrance.
4. Asplund: Three Crematorium Chapels (1935-1940).
5. Asplund: Woodland Cemetery (1918-1920).
6. Way of the Seven Wells.
7. Chapel of the Resurrection (1922-1926).

2

Part One: The Chapel of the Resurrection, Woodland Cemetery (1922-25)

The Chapel of the Resurrection can be understood only when it is seen as the penultimate term in a sequence of events running the full length, from north to south, of the Woodland Cemetery near Stockholm [2]. This route commences with the moment of arrival at the main northern entrance and concludes in the sunken burial ground that lies in the south-west corner of the cemetery grounds. Before following the course of this sequence it is helpful to recall an earlier project of Lewerentz' in which he had explored the theme of the cemetery chapel in a profoundly original way. The project was for the cemetery at Helsingborg in 1914 [3]; this was in the early days of the practice of cremation and Maurice Maeterlinck had been drawn in by the town commissioner to help formulate a "program." It was proposed that the mourners should not return to exit through the door by which they had entered, but instead pass through a progressive "rite-of-passage" moving on from the Hall of Death up into the Hall of Life. Lewerentz extended this sequence to pass out into an arcaded columbarium with a pavilion of remembrance

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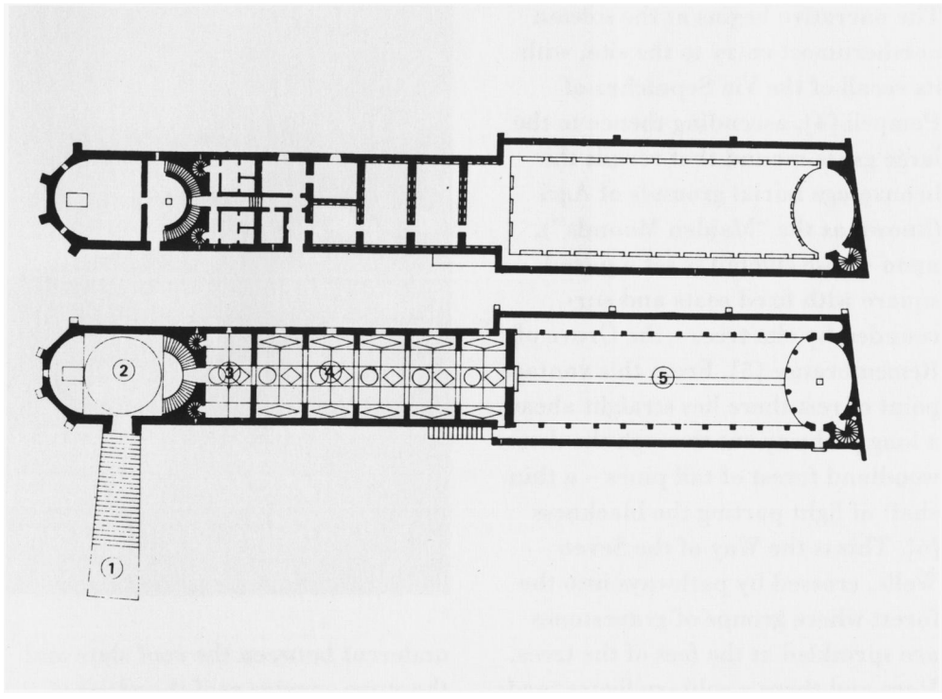

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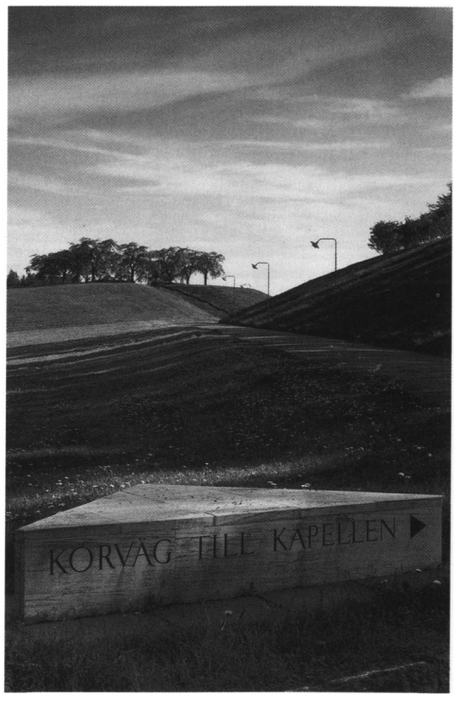

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at its far end; he further elaborated upon this theme by proposing the passage of a stream under the chapel on its cross axis, thereby compounding the ancient symbolism of the river Styx as it flowed toward the building to emerge on the far side as the fountain of life renewed. This is not merely the contrivance of a *promenade architecturale;* it is the enframing and sustaining – through architecture – of a common experience of great poignancy: the necessary acceptance of death, the decent rituals of mourning.

In the final version of the Chapel of the Resurrection (as conceived in March 1922), Lewerentz extends this experience of the confrontation with death to a much larger canvas, beyond the isolated building and out into the landscape at its most sublime.

The design of this Woodland Cemetery, won in competition in 1915 in a joint submission with Asplund, went through a number of evolutionary stages. It is my belief that Lewerentz was the principal agent in this work. The initial scheme proposed a wide range of episodes disposed along the forest pathways, the Way of the Cross and the Way of the Seven Wells, leading to two separate chapels. The provenance of this sublime landscape of Nordic forest and traditional grave-mound, compounded by the romantic imagery of Caspar David Friedrich, has been discussed at some length by Stuart Wrede.[1] Suffice it to say here that Lewerentz' mastery of landscape at this scale is unmatched in our time.

[1] Stuart Wrede, "Architecture and Landscape: The Work of Erik Gunnar Asplund"; PERSPECTA 20: *The Yale Architectural Journal* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983).

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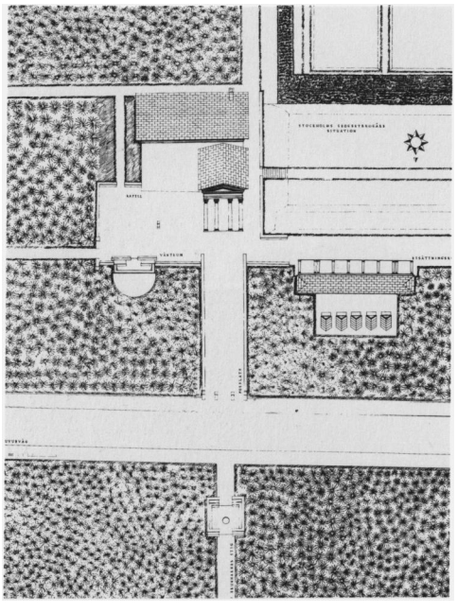

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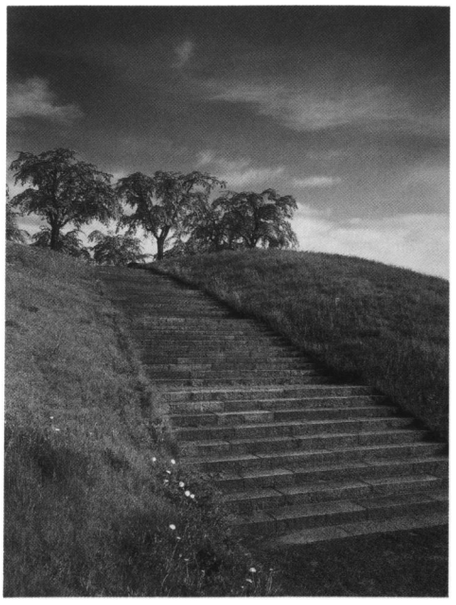
The narrative begins at the solemn northernmost entry to the site, with its recall of the Via Sepulchra of Pompeii [4], ascending thence to the large grass-mound that recalls the bronze-age burial grounds of Agri (known as the "Maiden Mounds"), upon whose summit is set a paved square with fixed seats and surrounded by elm trees – the Grove of Remembrance [5]. From this vantage point of rest there lies straight ahead a long pathway cut through the dense woodland forest of tall pines – a thin shaft of light parting the blackness [6]. This is the Way of the Seven Wells, crossed by pathways into the forest where groups of gravestones are sprinkled at the feet of the trees. Here and there a solitary figure tends a grave. Gradually a white glimmer at the end of the forest path comes into focus, announcing the presence of a tall limestone portico; we are about to arrive at the Chapel of the Resurrection [7, 8].

As to the chapel itself, the first thing we notice is that the portico that has closed the view of the forest path is not only disengaged from the megaron form of the chapel but is set, ever so slightly, at an angle to it. This departure from the orthogonal draws with it the plane of the west gable wall of the chapel itself [9,10].

This disengagement is enigmatic. It is a condition present elsewhere in the building at the scale of detail. For instance, just as we see daylight between the roof of the portico and the eaves of the chapel, so too at eaves level of the chapel there is a deep



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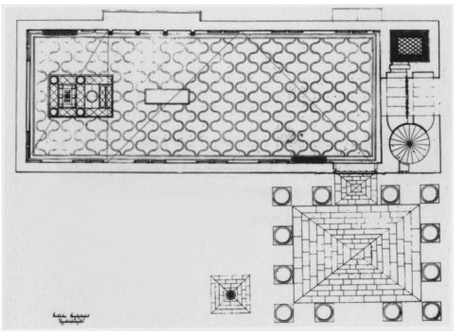
undercut between the roof slate and the stone cornice as if the plane of slates hovered above the body of the chapel itself [11,12].

I know of no precedent for such independence between portico and sanctuary; for instance, not even the Erectheion has this freedom.[2] However, wherever we look in the chapel, things are not quite what we are led to expect. This ramifying strangeness takes hold of the attention in a way that seems to address the visitor personally. We are confronted by something evidently intentional, something that quite spontaneously "feels right" and yet eludes easy explanation.

The entrance to the chapel stands behind the north-facing portico [13]. The exit is a separate, minor doorway in the west-facing gable. It is clear, therefore, that Lewerentz is applying the principles of the Rite of

[2] There is one equivalent case and that is Asplund's borrowing (ten years later) of the same motif in the large Chapel of the Holy Cross constructed on the eastern part of the site.



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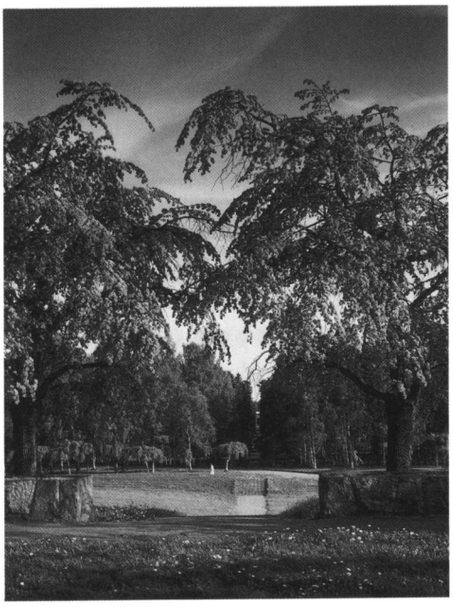

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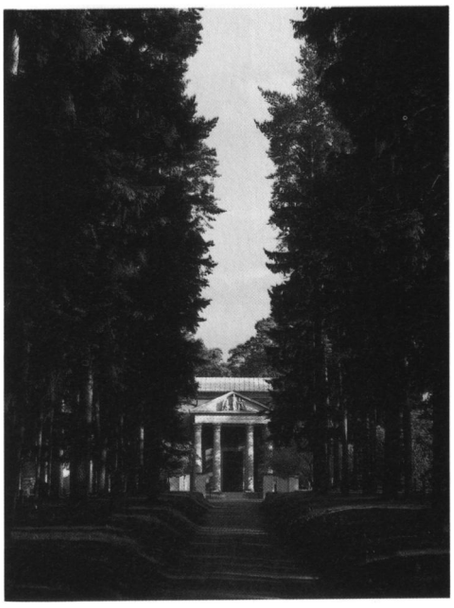

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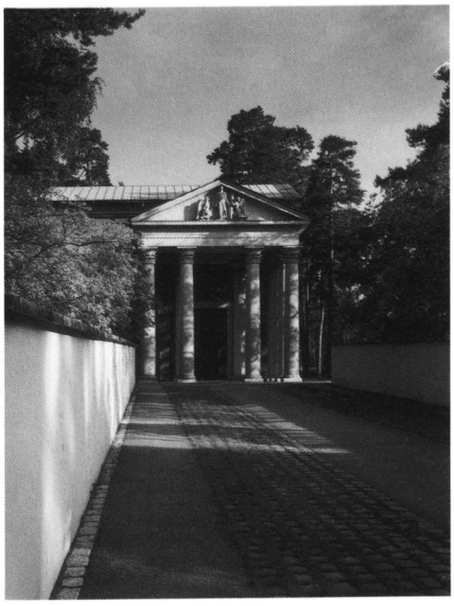

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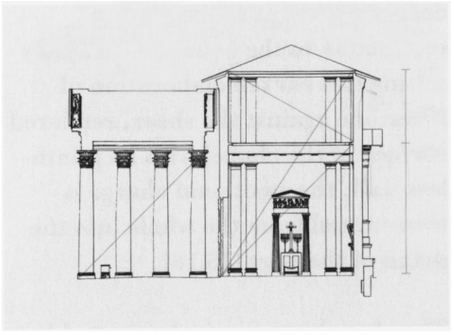
Passage. The exit opens towards a flight of steps that lead down into a sunken graveyard, surrounded by trees but also flanked along its northern edge by a range of cells in which coffins awaiting burial can be housed. It is in this sunken court that the journey that started at the northern entrance to the cemetery comes to its intended terminus [14].

I suggest here that the freeing of the portico is to compensate for the weakness inherent in locating it at the far corner of the chapel, a location necessary to the sequence of ritual inherent in the Rite of Passage procession. For this sequence would clearly require that the entrance door should be located as far from the east end as possible without actually being in the west wall, which is to be reserved as location for the exit. To have simply attached a portico in a conventional way to the corner of the chapel would have been formally very banal. On the other hand, if given the self-sufficiency that would follow from both its separation and its shift in axis, the portico could win strength enough to assert itself and thereby create a strong dialogue with the austere megaron of the church.



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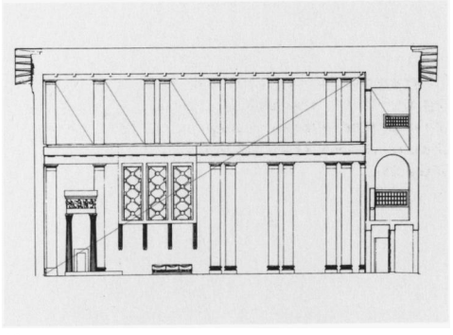

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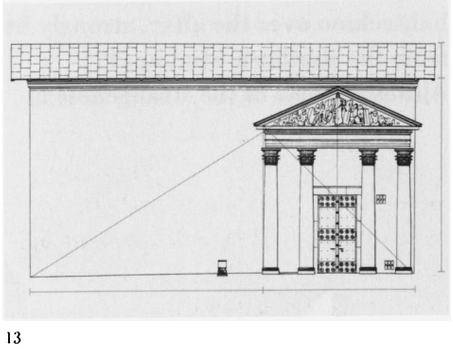

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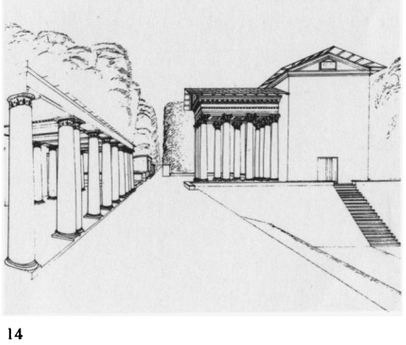

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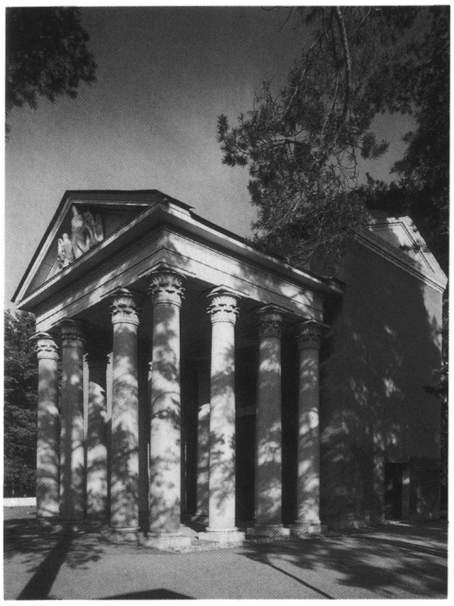

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[3] The intervals between the antae are irregular and their distribution on the north wall is not recalled on the south wall.

17

The "Corinthian" order of the chapel is an original invention in which memories of the Tower of the Winds in Athens are compounded with the Theban bell-capital – which, like the plane of the roof slates, is deeply undercut at the plane of connection to the square abacus. By setting this carved elaboration of limestone against the sheer, rendered surface of the chapel with its plinthless wall, the emotional charge is transmitted from the whole into the detail of the part [15,16].

The chapel interior is dominated by the presence of a tall aedicular baldachino over the altar, strongly lit from the southern window [17]. Although some of the strangeness in this interior is of a conventional mannerist nature (recalling in its distension and structure-less "wallpaper" of pilasters [3] the stair-hall of Michelangelo's Biblioteca Laurenziana), the real strangeness lies in that transposition whereby the powerful aedicule – whose presence outside dominates the chapel – is recalled within by the stiff, tall stance of the baldachino [15]. There is something haunting about this insistence, its juxtaposition and transformation that hints at some metaphor we cannot grasp – a quality to which de Chirico ascribed the status of the metaphysical.

Overall, there presides in both part and whole a truly Grecian canon of proportion, founded upon the square, the golden section and their compounding in the square-root-of-five relationship. The application here is rigorous and confirms my belief that where this is so, the presence of a building becomes charged with *gravitas*: constant relationships are perceived simultaneously or in time, as verse is measured out by rhyme and this insistence builds up to an unshakeable authority [10-13].

Yet a question still hangs over this building. The language, however fluent, seems to be handled in parentheses, held somehow at arm's length; it is interesting that at its inauguration in December, 1925, Sven Markelius was already challenging the "seductively delicate" but "unessential" nature of its detail.

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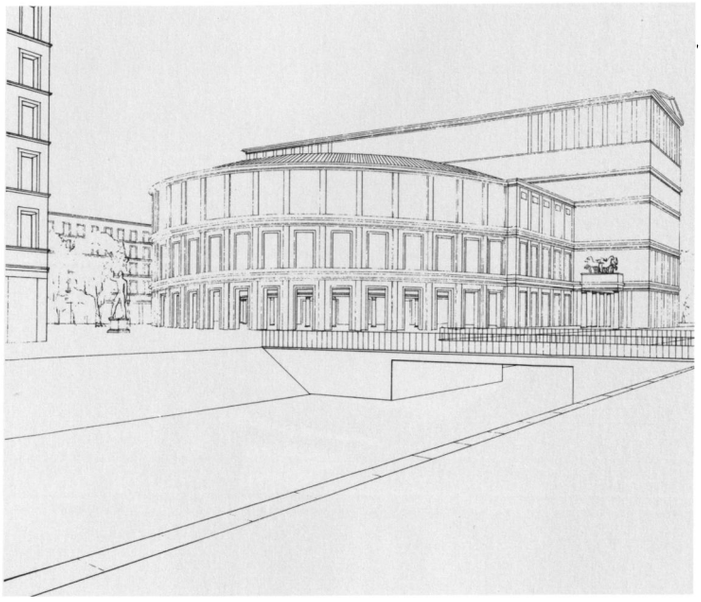
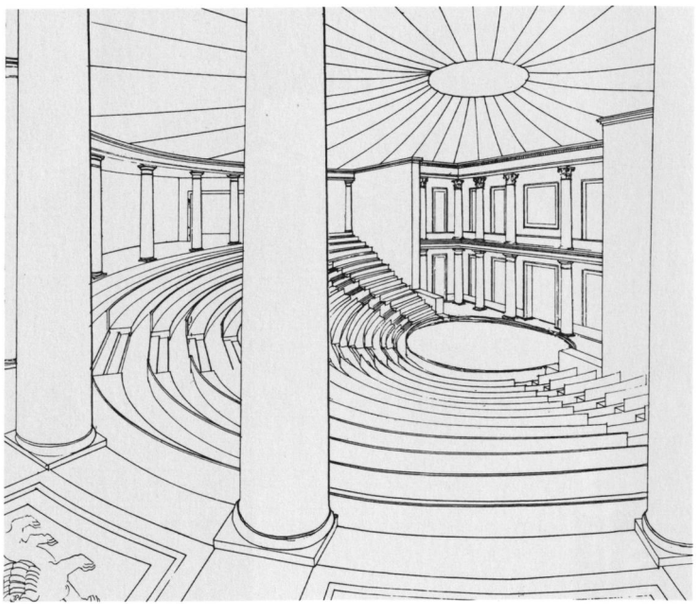


18a



18b

At the time of completion of this building, Lewerentz produced a further group of designs of extraordinary elegance in the manner of Schinkel. The projects are equal to anything that Schinkel himself produced; the 1926 Malmo theater [18a-c] is even richer in ideas than the Schinkel Schauspielhaus in Berlin, and little among Schinkel's monumental work can rival the cemetery projects of this period in Lewerentz' career [19a,b]. Be that as it may, the drawings, which are now unchallenged masterpieces of their kind, demonstrate a finesse in the invention and manipulation of classical themes that is truly remarkable. Certainly they establish a position of such perfection that the reasons for the subsequent rejection of this language must have had a quite exceptional urgency.

Many others, including Asplund, made the shift shortly afterwards to the "white" architecture of the 1930 Stockholm Exhibition, but none carried that turn to the pitch which earned Lewerentz the reputation by the late 1950s of being a godfather to the Brutalists. The well known church of St. Mark's at Skarpnack, built in the late 1950s, and the less-well known, later church at Klippan, completed when Lewerentz was over 80, went far beyond the limits of "rationalist" reduction in means. There is nothing left now of that "Swedish Grace" and not a sign of the courtly language of Schinkel. This development has some parallel to the contemporary work of Le Corbusier in the Maisons Jaoul and to the wider contemporary trend towards *l'art brut*. Reyner Banham, in his 1956 book THE NEW BRUTALISM, had even roped Lewerentz into that loosely formulated and ill-named canon, albeit with some circumspection, since Lewerentz' motivation was clearly different from that of the

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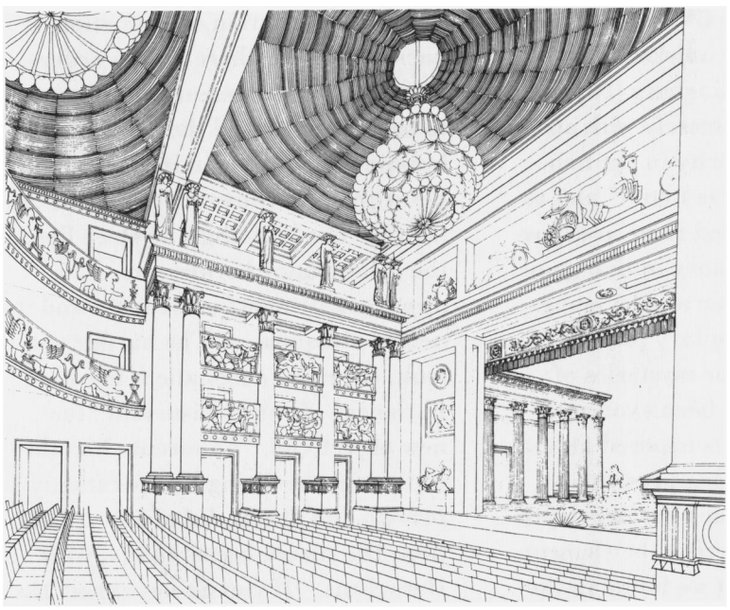

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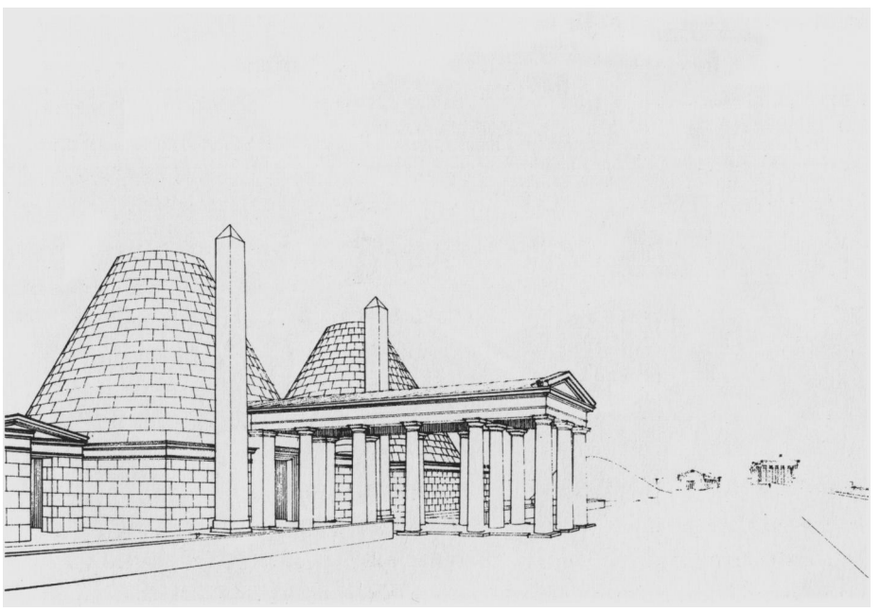

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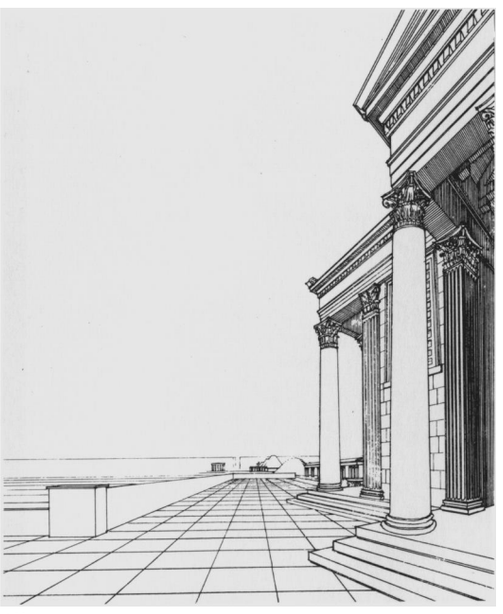

19b

other architects in that book. Consideration of that difference necessarily relates to Lewerentz' turn away from the Classical language and that turn is most dramatically demonstrated in his last building – the Church of St. Peter at Klippan in southern Sweden.

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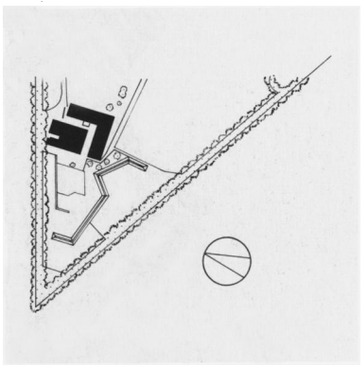
Part Two: The Church of St. Peter at Klippan (1963-66)

Confronted by the Church of St. Peter, sited on the outskirts of Klippan near Helsingborg [20], we are presented not merely with an unparalleled austerity in the handling of material "as found" and an equally unparalleled rigor in exposing to view every move in that game. We are not, in other words, being treated to an exemplary piece of candor in which the mysteries of building lore have been exorcised and the simple facts exposed at last. Instead, we are being presented with a theme of much greater depth and once again there is the element of strangeness that we found in the Resurrection Chapel – though it is of a different order. It does not lie in the reinterpretation or distortion of ancient themes: there are no orders, no portico or pediment or symmetry to be subverted and therefore the building does not lend itself to description in conventional terms [21-25]. The building's mystery lies in the discrepancy between its *apparent* straightforwardness and its *actual* obliqueness. The harder you look, the more enigmatic it becomes. In the age of rationalism and "the new objectivity," Lewerentz had the reputation for being exasperatingly private and disdainful of all explanation. His silence seems to say, with Heraclitus, "If you do not expect the unexpected, you will not discover it."



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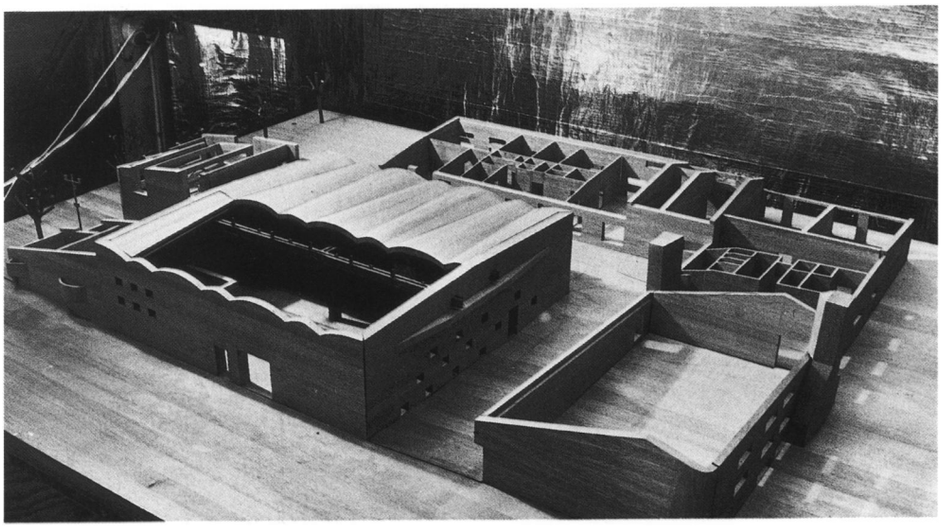

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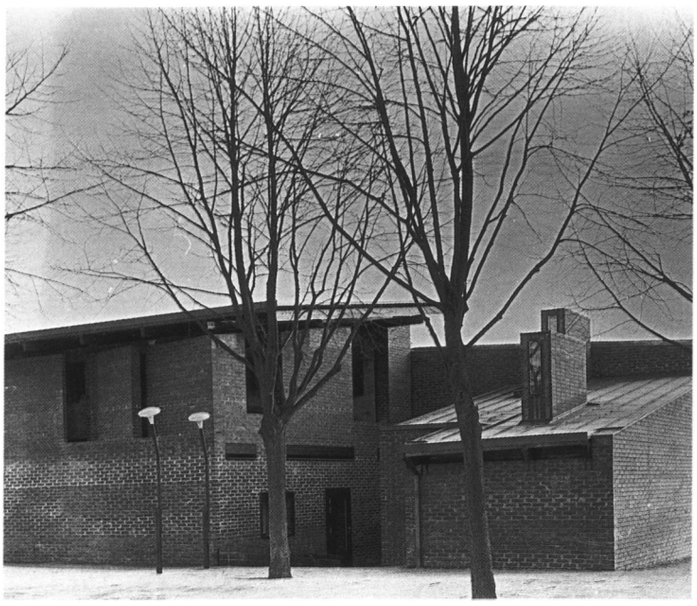

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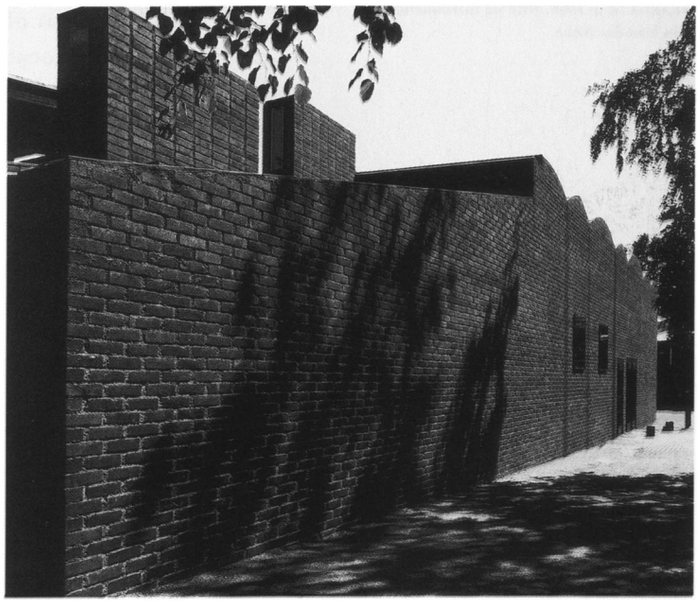

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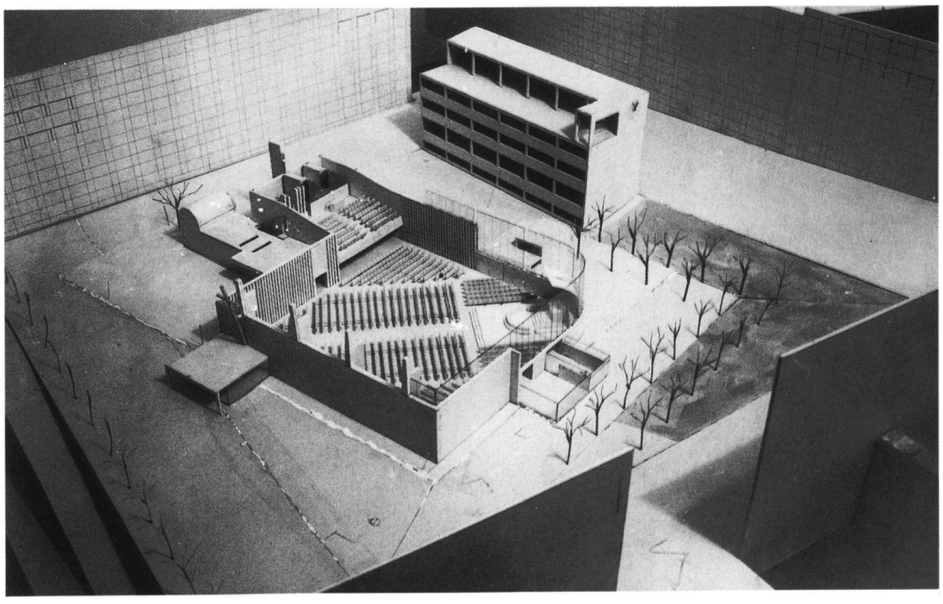
The competition design for the Johannesberg Church of 1933 [26], carried out during Lewerentz' "white" period in the thirties, prefigures a major issue in the design of the church in Klippan. As so often with Lewerentz, the great virtue and subtle originality of his thinking was instantly grasped by the most intelligent of his architectural contemporaries, but was not understood by the members of the jury. The point at issue is the rethinking of plan-form for the performance of the liturgy. This subject is now well-rehearsed and Rudolf Schwarz' VOM BAU DER KIRCHE of 1938 [4] stands as a remarkable document of exploration at that time. The relocation of the altar was a prime consideration. Instead of being sited at the far end of a linear (basilican) space so that the officiating priest stands between the congregation and the altar performing the office with his back to the congregation, the altar was now to be moved into the heart of the congregation. The term that Schwarz used, "the Open Circle," corresponds closely to the term used by Lewerentz – "Circumstantes." By this conception, the congregation surrounds the performance of the sacraments, which is therefore carried out in full view of the communicants. The Johannesberg project proposes a plan of just such a form. Although in his celebrated St. Mark's Church at Skarpnack, completed in 1960, Lewerentz adopted the linear basilican form, with St. Peter's in Klippan he returns to a forceful application of the principal of "Circumstantes" [27a-c].

Once again, just as the Helsingborg Crematorium and the Chapel of the Resurrection grew from a reinterpretation of the ceremony of the Committal of the Dead, so here the new principle of "Circumstantes" lies at the heart of a new plan-form. It should also be emphasized that the justification for such a "new" form is precisely that it was the most ancient, indeed the original, form of celebration of the Eucharist in the primitive Church.

[4] Published in translation as THE CHURCH INCARNATE in 1958, with an introduction by Mies Van der Rohe.



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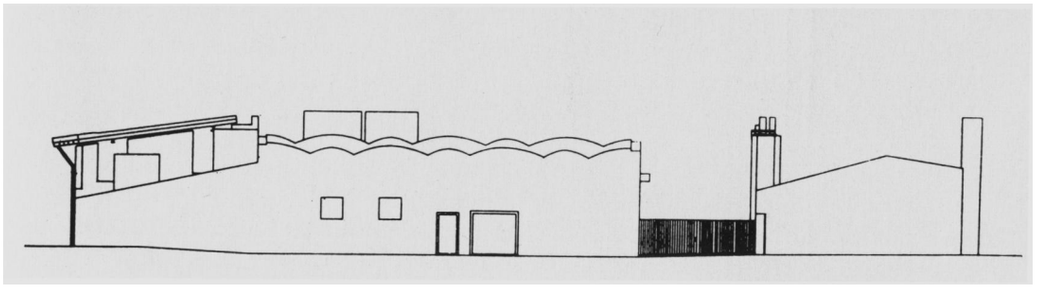

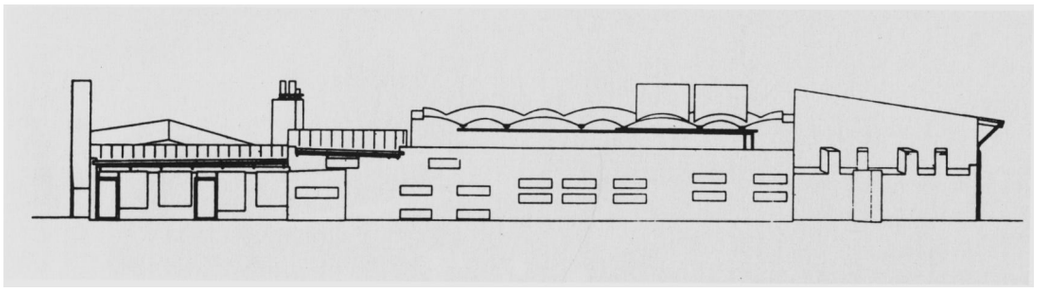

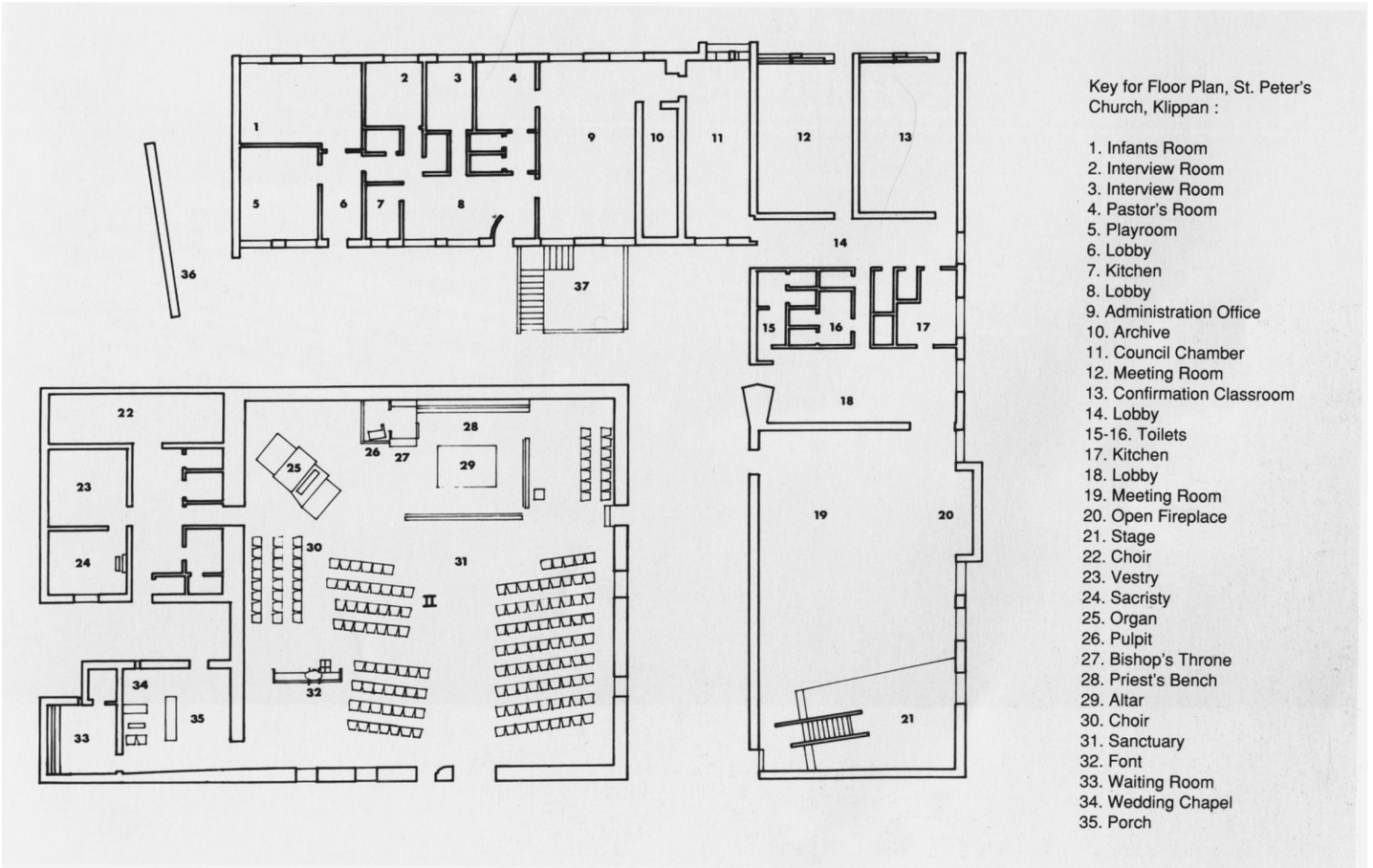

Key for Floor Plan, St. Peter's Church, Klippan :

1. Infants Room
2. Interview Room
3. Interview Room
4. Pastor's Room
5. Playroom
6. Lobby
7. Kitchen
8. Lobby
9. Administration Office
10. Archive
11. Council Chamber
12. Meeting Room
13. Confirmation Classroom
14. Lobby
15-16. Toilets
17. Kitchen
18. Lobby
19. Meeting Room
20. Open Fireplace
21. Stage
22. Choir
23. Vestry
24. Sacristy
25. Organ
26. Pulpit
27. Bishop's Throne
28. Priest's Bench
29. Altar
30. Choir
31. Sanctuary
32. Font
33. Waiting Room
34. Wedding Chapel
35. Porch

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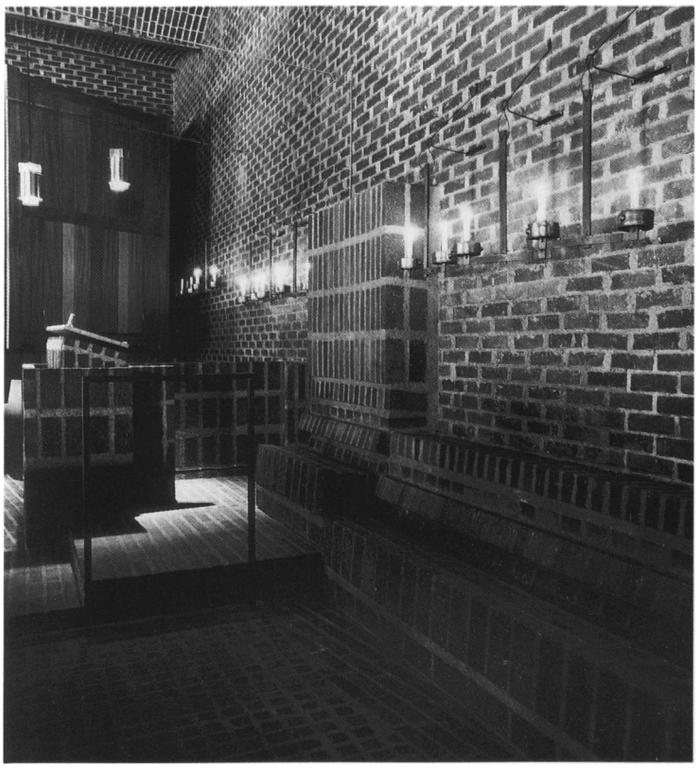
Thus the plan-form of the church itself at Klippan shows the altar surrounded (counter-clockwise) by the priest's seat, pulpit, organ, choir, baptismal font, congregation, and lay-clergy [28-30]. The priest's point of entry is immediately from the sacristy to the north; the congregation have two points of entry (from west and south) directly from outside, and one (from the north) [31] through a protected entry porch to which is attached a small wedding chapel [32]. There is a bell-tower over the sacristy. The other elements of the church center – meeting room [33], communicants' classrooms, parish council [34], children's club and pastor's office – take the form of an enclosing L-shape lying protectively to the east and south against the prevailing wind and forming a communal "street-court" as an extension of the meeting rooms and the children's club. The children's club, in turn, has its own sunken courtyard at the center of this street [35].



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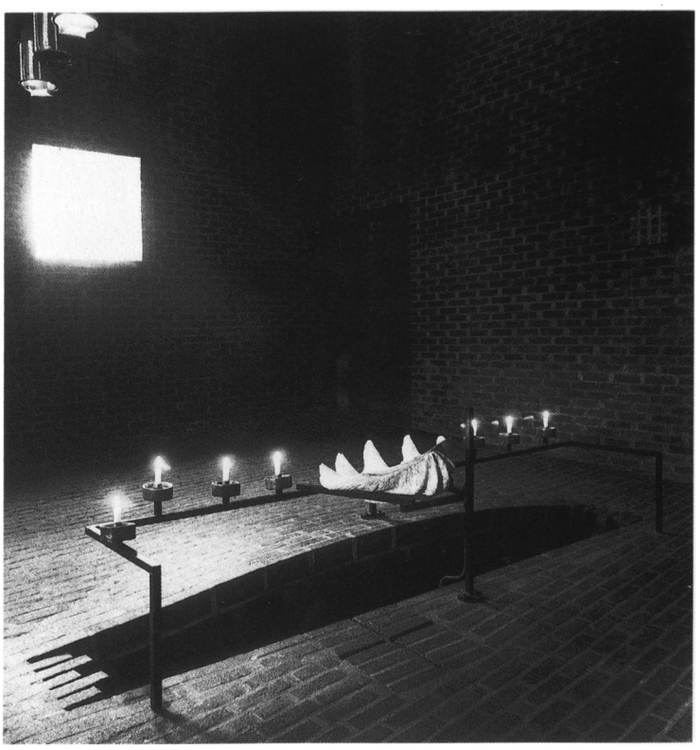

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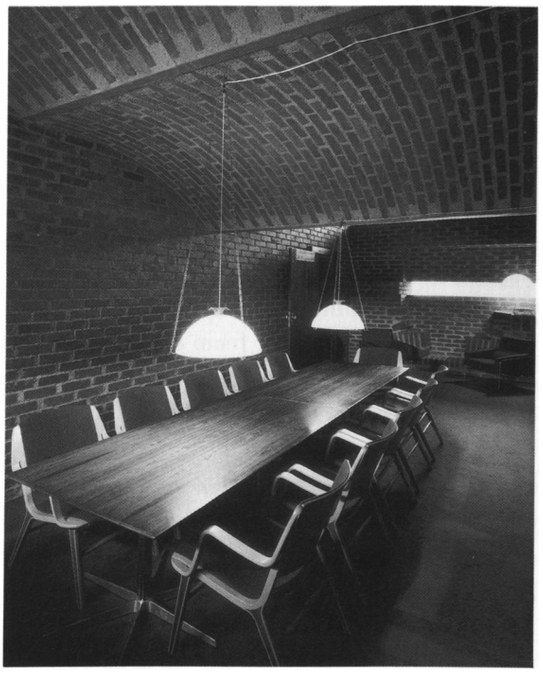

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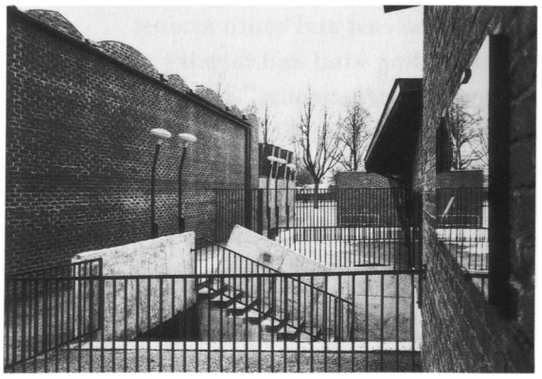

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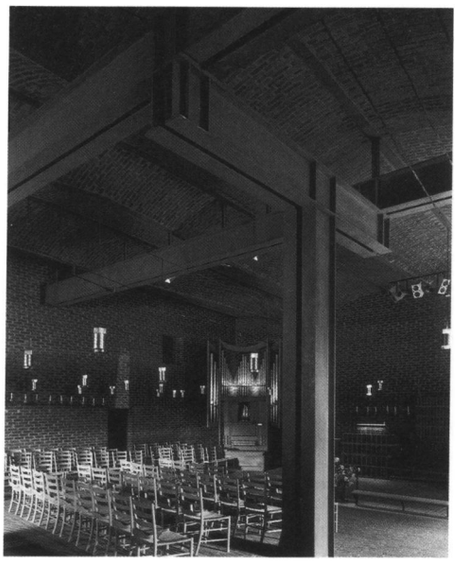
In proposing the square plan-form required by the principle of "Circumstantes," Lewerentz was confronted by the need to reduce the span of his roof members by some form of intermediate support. In this case, as at Skarpnack, the roof elements take the form of vaults. But whereas at Skarpnack the vaults invariably ran laterally to the nave axis, he now had a chance to run them along the main axis towards the altar – albeit that they require some form of intermediate support to reduce the length of the span across the entire church (eighteen meters, or approximately sixty feet). This could not be achieved in the masonry structure used elsewhere without massive invasion of the central zone of the church. Lewerentz was thus led to adopt some form of columnar support. At first he divided his space by a pair of columns [36]; later he proposed a solution which not only reduces the degree of interruption to a minimum but also (as we shall shortly see) imports a symbolic gesture which is as profoundly apt as it is original. A single column supports a short cross beam which in turn supports at each extremity a pair of lateral beams whose outer support lies in the side walls [37].

At this point we have to note that strange instinct by which Lewerentz, apparently concerned only with a dogged working-out of an issue in terms of building construction, at last arrived at a figure pregnant with symbolic meaning. For at one stroke this technical device of column and cross-beam thrusts into the center of the church a form that irresistibly recalls the central symbol of both the New and the Old Testament – the Tree of Knowledge and the Cross of Redemption [38].



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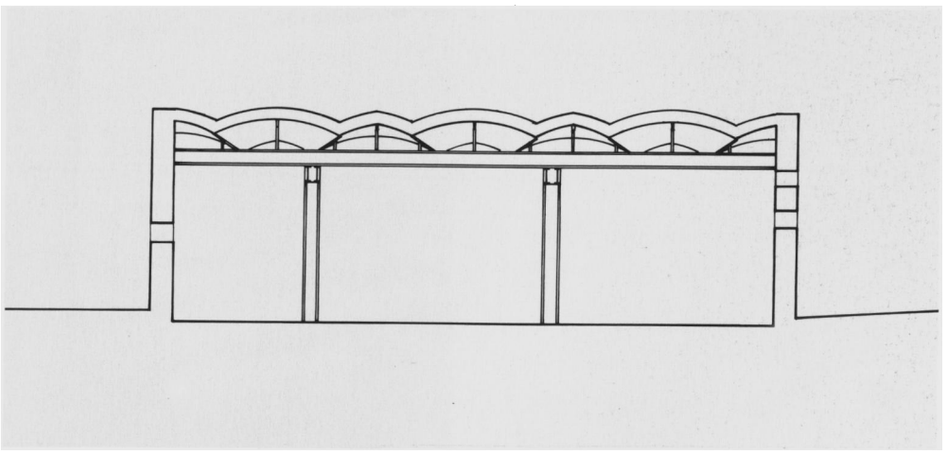

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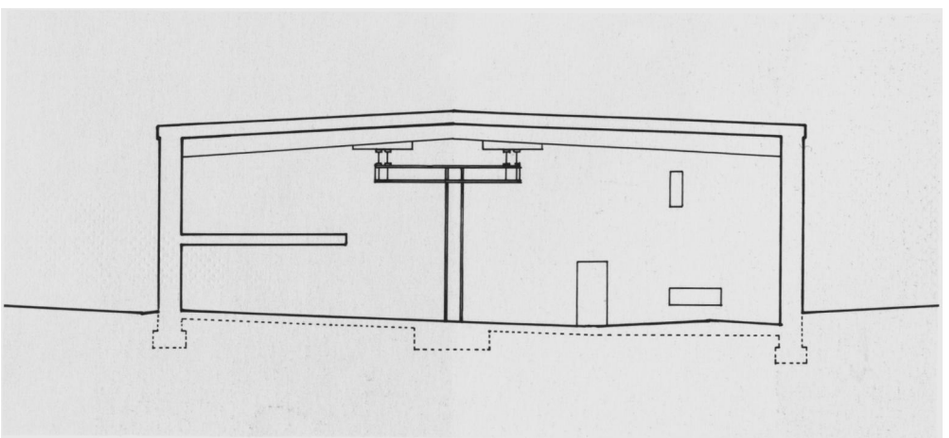

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It seems worthwhile therefore to look closer at the building rules that Lewerentz set himself. In the first place we find that the use of brick is subject to three propositions stringently applied in the teeth of common sense compromise. First, Lewerentz proposes to use it for all purposes: wall, floor, vault, roof light, altar, pulpit, seat. Secondly, he will only use the standard, full-size brick: there will be no specially-shaped bricks. Thirdly, no brick is to be cut.[5] The only way these conditions can be met is by a very free proportioning in the ratio of mortar to brick; to achieve such jointing (often very large) a very dry mortar mix which included ground slate is employed. The overall effect is of a surface in which the bricks appear to be embedded in a matrix of mortar rather than laid up in bonded course work of conventional joints [32]. This effect brings with it memories of ancient brickwork, Byzantine and Persian, as well as the indigenous vernacular of farm buildings. Heating and ventilation are incorporated in the brickwork such that the cavity walls of the church serve as a plenum acting through a pattern of open perpend joints or through open channels at window sills. The refusal

[5] Lewerentz drew the setting-out of every brick at a scale of 1:20, and then demanded that the bricklayers should use neither plumb-line nor spirit-level.

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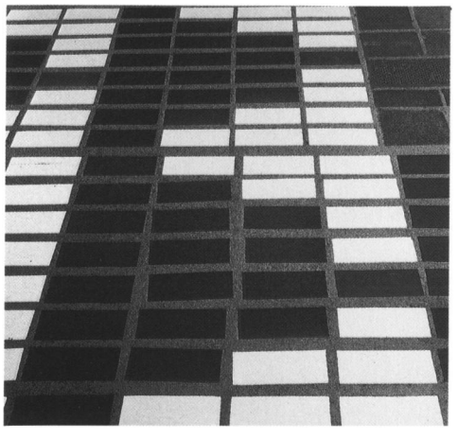
to cut a brick produces some startling results – for instance, in the window openings to offices (in which the cavity between inner and outer leaf is kept open as just such a channel for warm air) the toothwork of the outer leaf stands exposed [39]. A similar serration occurs at the springing of each vault and at each end of the fissure in the floor created by the font [30].

Similarly, floor tiles are never cut, whether they be brick or the wider range of Hoganas tiles of different color and size. Their pattern is frequently eccentric, and width of joint random, but all such work was carried out to the on-the-spot instructions of Lewerentz, who apparently spent three entire days a week on the site [40a-d,41].

Openings – be they for door or window – are never framed *into*. Closure is effected by applying an element across the opening to the face of the wall. Thus, both door and doorframe, or glazing element, sit on the face of the wall, not in it [42a,b; 43a,b]. Consequently, the surfaces of the wall and its openings are massively complete irrespective of all trim or services.



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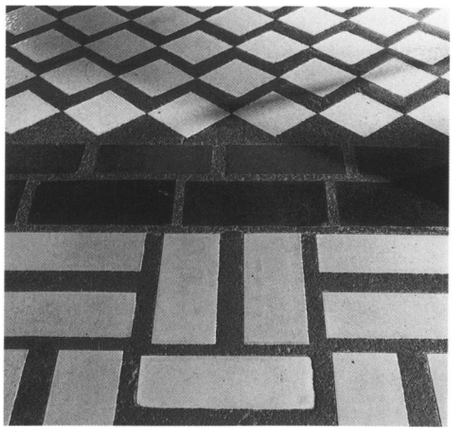

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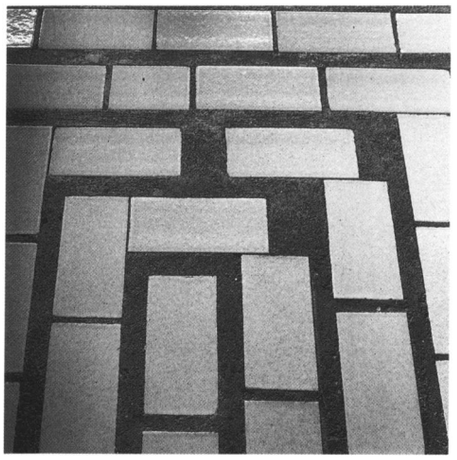

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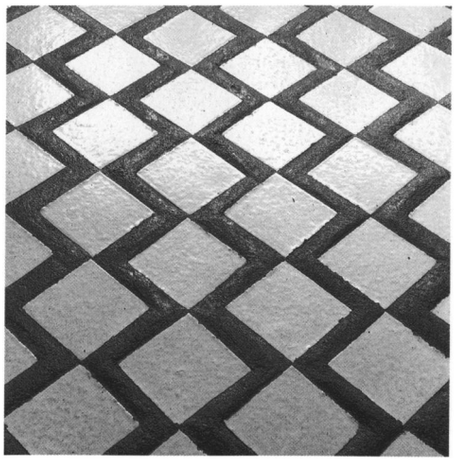

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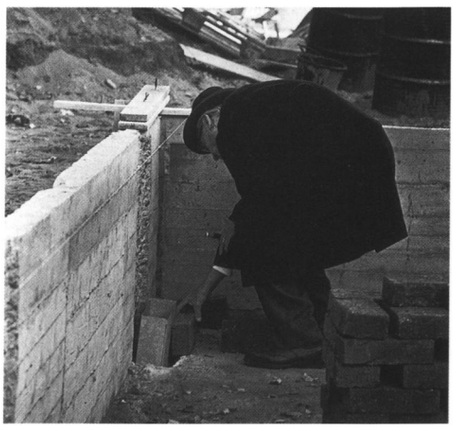

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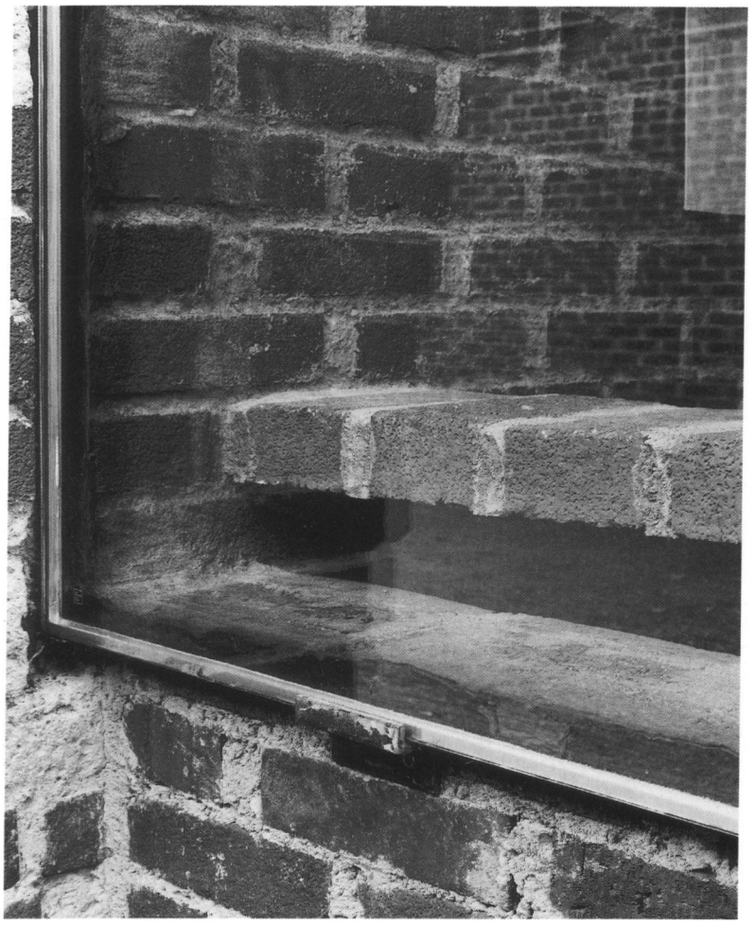
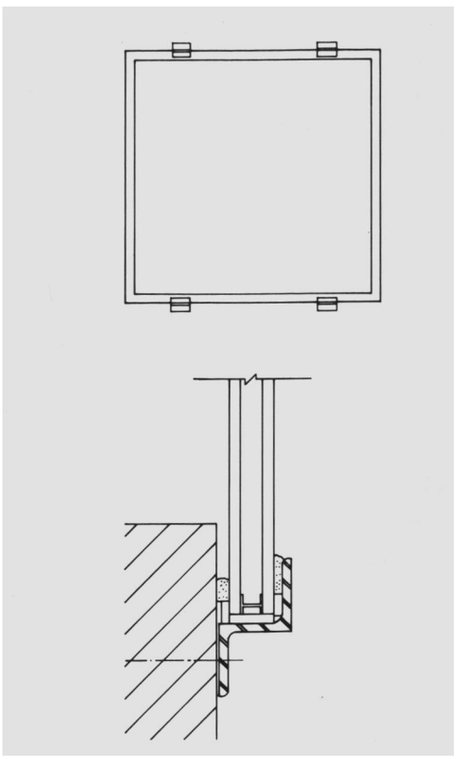


42a



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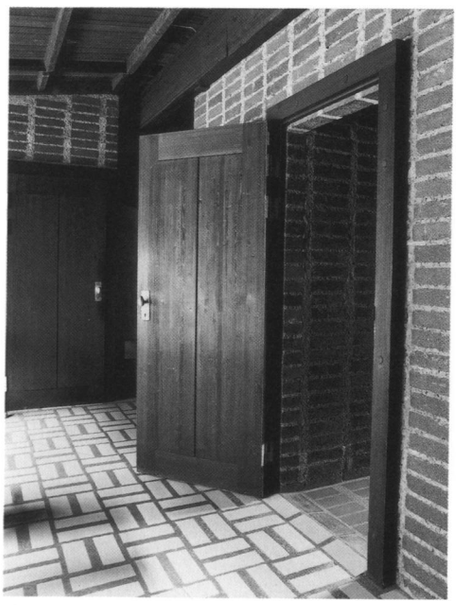

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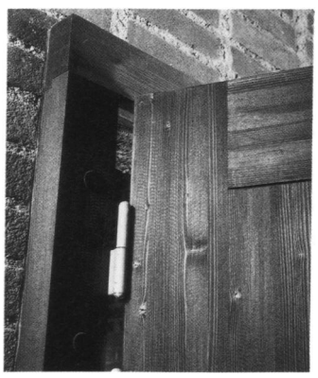

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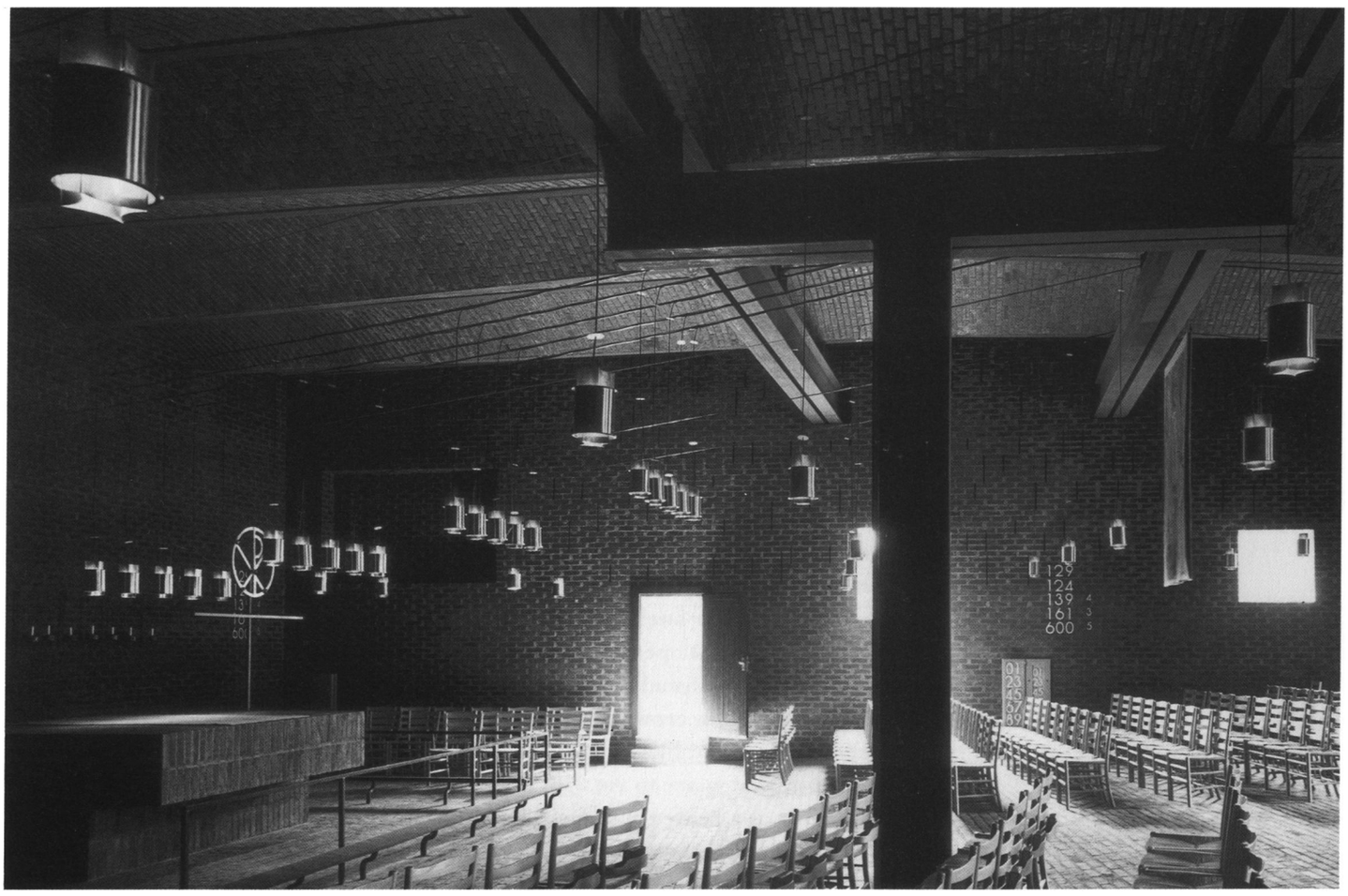

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As with the Chapel of the Resurrection, we are once again confronted with the unexpected. For instance, nothing could be more straightforward than a brick; but if you write into the application the rules that we have described, then a strange spell begins to take over. And if, having spent half a lifetime designing, manufacturing, and marketing metal windows, an architect decides to have no window-frames or windows but simply to seal clear openings with double-glazed panels clamped to the outside of the brickwork, then it were better that nothing be taken for granted. A square plan seems simple enough; but let the floor as it slopes down to the altar swell into a shallow mound and burst open to reveal a well for the baptismal shell; and let a raw steel column crowned with a cross-beam stand like a crucifix off-center of that space to vie with pulpit and altar as a center of focus, and a certain drama enters in.

The column itself is not what it at first appears to be: split in two from top to bottom, its twin cross-trees – which are not symmetrical – carry at their extremities yet further beams which are also split into pairs [45-47]. Upon these beams stand steel struts to support the metal ribs that support the brick vaults at both springing and ridge lines alternately [44]. Then again, these ribs to the vaults are neither horizontal (they pitch gently to the "center" of the church) nor do they run parallel but expand and contract as they run from wall to wall [48]. Lewerentz speaks of the vaults as a recall of the ancient symbol of the heavens, but here his treatment of them is strangely moving and insinuates into the mind a closer analogy to the rhythm of breathing – the rise and fall, the interlocking of expansion and contraction. Lewerentz (who was qualified as an engineer) worked closely with the project engineer and himself proposed the use of smaller steel sections, paired, rather than larger single sections so that light could shine through the middle of the structural assembly. To what extent these shifts and discontinuities are brought about for visual reasons or in compensation for the difference in physical performance between steel section and brick vault I do not know; the fact is that a technical requirement is transformed into a mystery and how this transformation is brought about is unfathomable.

Aristotle, writing in THE POETICS, assigns unique significance to the ability to invent metaphor:

[6] W.Hamilton Fyfe, editor, ARISTOTLE'S ART OF POETRY (London: The Oxford University Press, 1940), tr. Ingram Bywater, p. 62.

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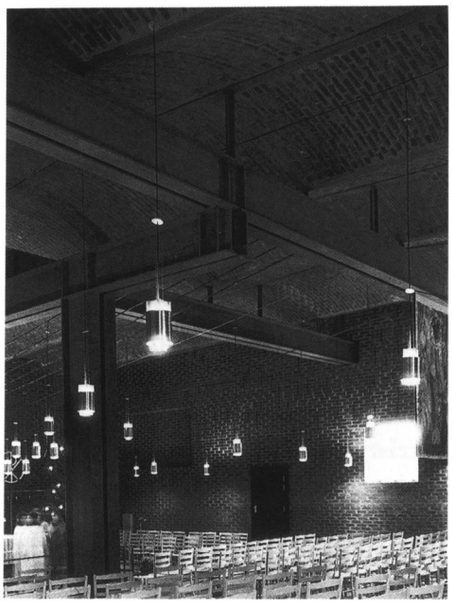
". . . the greatest thing by far is to be master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others and it is also a sign of genius since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars." [6]

Lewerentz was indeed just such a master of metaphor; we saw it in his handling of the aedicula theme in the Chapel of the Resurrection and we see it all around us in Klippan.



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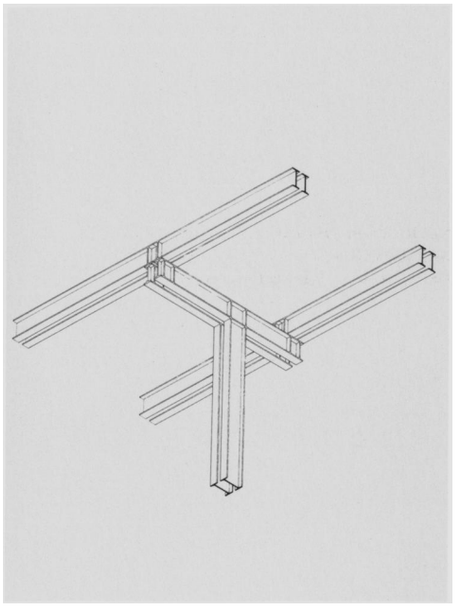

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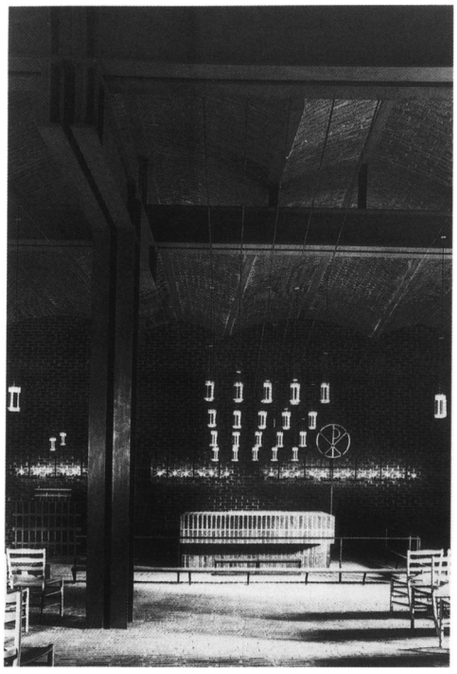

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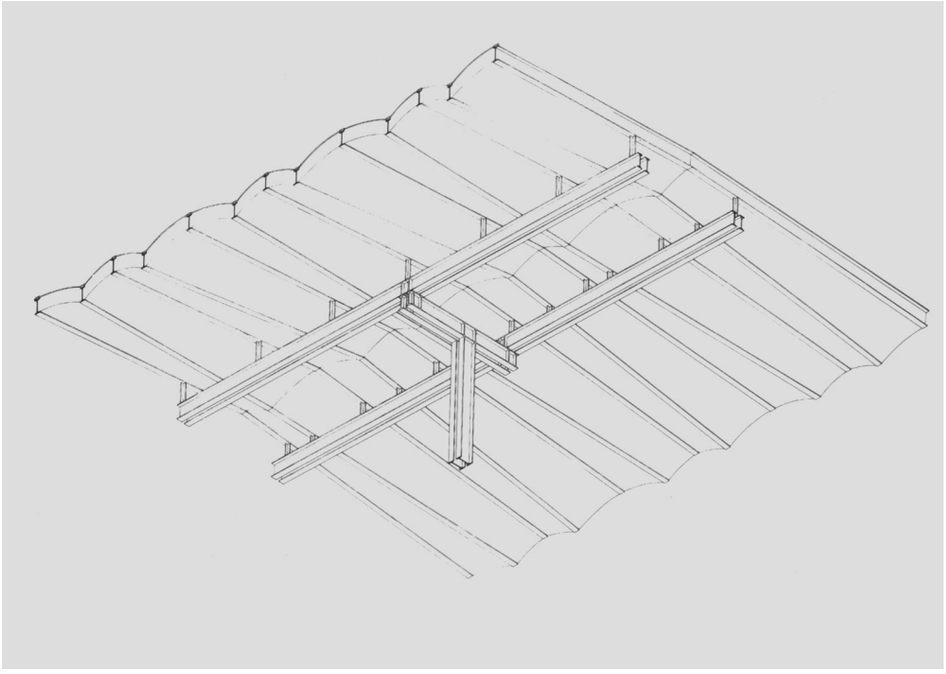

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Lewerentz' handling of light deepens this quality. In an age of "white architecture," of "the magnificent and knowing play of forms in light," Lewerentz invites us into darkness, to be enveloped in that space of darkness that calls upon all of the senses to read its limits and to locate ourselves within it [49]. Four small windows and two thin slots in the roof vault that throw light down into the line of procession between sacristy and altar are the only sources of daylight in the body of the church.

Lewerentz himself said that a low light-level introduces a factor of delay, slowing down the responses at the moment of entering the sanctuary since it takes time for the eye to adapt to the low level of light and to bring into focus the spatial limits and quality of surfaces determining them. He argued that such subdued light is enriching precisely in the degree to which the nature of the space unfolds gently, emerging only in response to exploration. This slow taking-possession of the space – the way in which it gradually becomes yours – in turn becomes entwined with a feeling that you are yourself enveloped in privacy: invited to pray in solitude. The gentle inclination of the floor from the entrance towards the east wall further induces the experience of being drawn into a presence.

Such space can be activated by the disposition of lights into the focussed spaces of church ritual or it can recede into isolated centers of solitary inward focus. Light is present not so much as a source of illumination as a source to be looked at – living light, candle light.

Finally we notice that in his handling of the facades Lewerentz is cryptic to a fault. The only rhetoric left is the peal of the bells. But this too recalls Byzantine practice: just as the rough brick shed gives way to a dark interior shimmering with oriental blue and gold in the tomb of Galla Placidia so, at Klippan, it is within that the building comes to life. Here we have not only a recollection of Adolf Loos, who "wrung the neck of rhetoric," but more aptly of Le Corbusier, who said of the monastery at La Tourette, the one building that most closely approximates Klippan in its concentration, its passion and its austerity: ". . . it does not talk. It is on the inside that it lives . . . that the essential lies."

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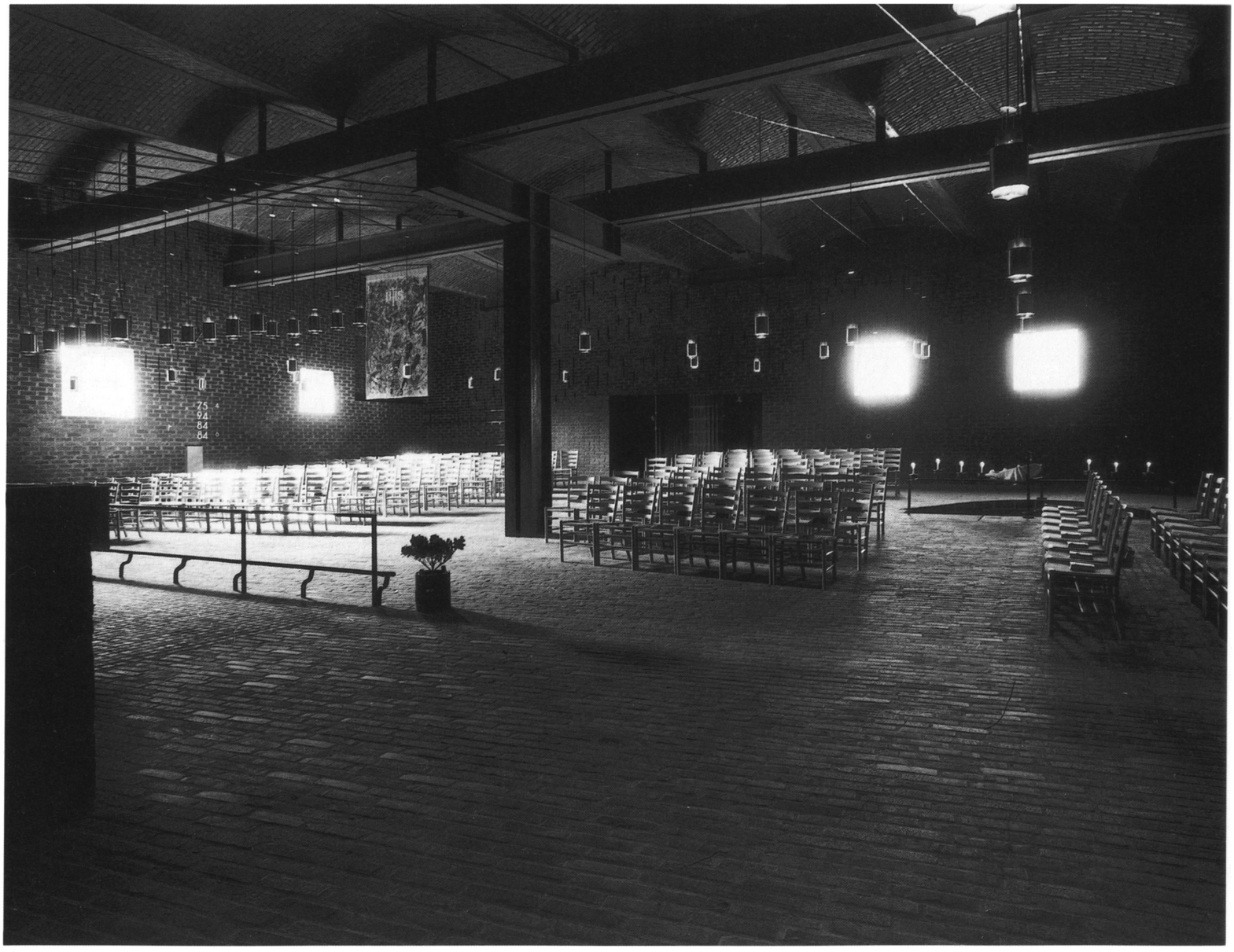

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Conclusion

We have now covered the ground that demands an answer to the question with which we started: To what end did Lewerentz, the most poetic master of the Classical language of architecture in this century, abandon that language?

As a student of Schinkel, Lewerentz would have been aware of that master's own conviction that the means of architecture would have to be "created anew. It would be a wretched business for architecture . . . if all the necessary elements . . . had been established once and for all in antiquity . . . ."[7] But Lewerentz' concern lay at a much deeper level than the pursuit of novelty.

In a remarkable chapter on Greek architecture in Lisle March Phillips' book THE WORKS OF MAN, we read: "Every shed builder who lays a stick on two uprights has mastered the structural principle of a Doric temple: but the Greeks alone have comprehended the inward significance of the act."[8] In Phillips' appraisal of the unprecedented ends to which the pursuit of optical corrections was carried, he advances the notion that what started out as optical rigour became transformed somehow into an ethical obsession. "Visual perception passes into ethical conception, the two are fused together. We think with the eye and see with the mind . . . . A Doric temple is saturated with ideas that were not put into it as ideas at all . . . but by another faculty (i.e. sight) . . . . Nothing in this strange art is what it seems to be . . . and the closer we carry our examination the more the mystery spreads and deepens . . . ."[9]

The Doric temple, then, confronts us with a provocative paradox: that which set out to be exclusively the object of sight becomes through the sheer intensity of its pursuit the focus of quite another discipline. This insight into a paradox matches very closely the quality of experience provoked by the buildings of Lewerentz. At a time of "isms," of *l'architecture à thèse*, of buildings required to be no more than demonstrations of some narrow issue, here was an architecture of extraordinary directness, utterly transparent to the functions it was created to serve, uniquely concrete in setting forth the substance and the manner of its making.

In developing the design of Klippan, Lewerentz spoke of two things only: the interpretation of the brief (there was a consultant on liturgical matters, Lars Ridderstedt) and questions of building construction (he and the foreman, Sjoholm, are said to have worked very closely together - often far into the evening planning the next day's work) [49]. But throughout the evolution of the design there were endless alterations and on-site revisions. This arduous search reminds me of a statement by the painter Michael Andrews: "Painting is the most marvelous, elaborate and complete way of making up my mind." At Klippan we become witnesses of the extraordinary process

[7] Karl Friedrich Schinkel, TAGEBUCHER BRIEFE GEDANKEN, ed. Makowski, (1922).

[8] Lisle March Phillips, THE WORKS OF MAN (London: Duckworth Press, 1911), p. 113.

[9] Ibid. p. 118.

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by which Lewerentz, at the age of eighty, slowly made up his mind.

This evidence of intense struggle by a mature artist is reminiscent of the contemporary mood in the other arts, of Giacometti and Samuel Beckett wrestling with the "impossibility" of their craft; of disgust at the facile self-indulgence and self-promotion of those who had "never had it so good"; of an elected poverty of means – as much by the young as by the disillusioned.

An eloquent passage in Heidegger's THE ORIGIN OF THE WORK OF ART describes how a Greek temple "does not cause the material to disappear but rather causes it to come forth for the very first time."[10] Just so in Klippan: brick was never more brick, steel more steel, glass more glass, wood more wood. In that attention to the essential nature of materials there lies a quality of respect that has its own morality. Ethics and aesthetics become one. It is not surprising therefore that the language of Classical forms was no longer available to Lewerentz. For that language was born out of an order of construction, transposed from timber and finding its final and essential refinement from the proportioning and fashioning intrinsic to stone. When Lewerentz built the Chapel of the Resurrection, the stonework of the portico was cut from the solid Ignaberga limestone. At that time in Sweden such a technology was in no way abnormal; it was not so in 1960. The sort of equivocation that satisfied a Lutyens – rolled steel columns encased in masonry "orders" – was beneath contempt for a man for whom the spirit of Greek architecture was far closer to his heart than the law. "Greece and poverty have always been bedfellows," wrote Herodotus. It is perhaps both chastening and reassuring to recall that the very foundation of Western culture is grounded upon something that is as simple and austere as it is difficult: the spirit that created the original and imperative ethos of the Doric out of the technology of its day. At a time when the fashionable madmen seek to revive the notion of "ritual" in order to give "meaning" to the pursuit of aesthetics and seek to reinstate the "Classical Language" in order to indulge in the shifts of rhetoric, it is salutary to do honor to the opposite mode, the true and humble process by which a new poetry was hammered out of the wrestle with necessity – in this case a profound reinterpretation of a church's sacraments. It should be equally salutary to recognize that this is the true order of things, the only way it has ever been with the creation of real architecture.

[10] Martin Heidegger, POETRY, LANGUAGE, THOUGHT (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 46.

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