

(More) Evidence the Reformation Was a Mistake

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Fir light reading, better to say reading that is unrelated to work, I am making my way through David Watkin's history of English architecture. And he begins chapter 4 with these words: " We ended the last chapter on a certain note of alarm at the change in patronage effected by the Reformation in England. Thus, after the break with Rome we find little architectural patronage by Henry VIII, less by Elizabeth and virtually none by the Anglican Church. This, indeed, is the first chapter which not only does not have ecclesiastical buildings as its main theme but in which there is no need to mention a single church at all!"

How very sad. It is not only that the Reformation in England produced more in the way of destruction than it did in the way of creation, although that is damning enough. It brings to mind Father Guissani's lectures on sin. He would set out a bowl of flowers before the lecture and, as he began, would throw the flowers on the floor and stamp on them. "That is sin," he would tell his rapt students. "The destruction of the beautiful." No, the larger problem is that the newly constituted Anglican Church did not see, or did not act on the thought, that it should express its most deeply felt beliefs in architectural form. It has been well said that man is never so happy as when he is building a cathedral. Every culture saves its most exquisite building enterprises for the praise of its divinities. But, in late Tudor England, nothing. How very sad.

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