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RESEARCH ARTICLE

# On the Material and Immaterial Architecture of Organised Positivism in Britain

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Positivism captured the Victorian imagination. Curiously, however, no work has focused on the architectural history and theory of Positivist halls in Britain. Scholars present these spaces of organised Positivism as being the same in thought and action throughout their existence, from the 1850s to the 1940s. Yet the British Positivists' inherently different views of the work of their leader, the French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798–1857), caused such friction between them that a great schism in the movement occurred in 1878. By the 1890s two separate British Positivist groups were using different space and syntax types for manifesting a common goal: social reorganisation. The *raison d'être* of these institutions was to realize Comte's utopian programme, called the Occidental Republic. In the rise of the first organised Positivist group in Britain, Richard Congreve's Chapel Street Hall championed the religious ritualism and cultural festivals of Comte's utopia; the terminus for this theory and practice was a temple typology, as seen in the case of Sydney Style's Liverpool Church of Humanity. Following the Chapel Street Hall schism of 1878, Newton Hall was in operation by 1881 and under the direction of Frederic Harrison. Harrison's group coveted intellectual and humanitarian activities over rigid ritualism; this tradition culminated in a synthetic, multi-function hall typology, as seen in the case of Patrick Geddes' Outlook Tower. Thus though seeking the same end – to transform society for the better – the two Positivist groups went about their work in inherently different ways.

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## Introduction

Positivism captured the Victorian imagination. It held the interest of thinkers as diverse as Annie Besant, H. M. Hyndman, John Ruskin, Charles Booth and Beatrice Webb. It was recalled as being 'at once a scheme of Education, a form of Religion, a school of Philosophy, [and] a method of Government' (Harrison 1907b: 44–45). In other words, Positivism was 'a complete, universal, and religious socialism [...] a whole scheme of life, of education, and of Industry' founded on sociology (Harrison 1908: 428). It was a systematic response to rapid urbanisation, imperialistic wrongs and the Victorian crisis of faith (Claeys 2010; Dixon 2008; Wilson 2015).

Notwithstanding, the history of the British Positivists is often summed up in a couple of jokes about their eccentric 'Religion of Humanity'. That it was a passing phase – a curious 'Catholicism *minus* Christianity' – is a popular quip (Congreve 1874: 265; Huxley 1870: 88, 153–91). Quite often, it is commented that while this form of religious humanism was widespread, its true 'complete' followers were few and far between. Another jovial jab, then, is that during the British Positivists' schism of 1878, its handful of members arrived in a single cab and left in two (Wright 1986: 4). Scholars claim that thereafter the

two distinct groups remained the same in thought and action. Using an interdisciplinary method borrowed from the history of ideas, I will argue in this essay that at least two strands of Positivism had emerged by the 1890s. Focusing on the interrelations between the immaterial and material architecture of British Positivism, I will show that these two traditions used different space and syntax types for manifesting a common goal. That goal was social reorganisation.

First, it will be necessary to provide an account of the ideas of the architect of Positivist sociology, Auguste Comte. We will focus on the immaterial architecture of his 'Occidental Republic' or 'Republic of the West'. Comte discussed this utopian programme for social reorganisation in his 'sociological treatise', *System of Positive Polity* (1848–54). We will then see how this immaterial architecture structured the activities of Comte's first followers in Britain, who were led by the Aristotelian scholar Richard Congreve. From the 1860s, Congreve's Chapel Street Hall promoted a systematic policy of cultural and political activities based on Comte's utopia. However, the emphasis here became increasingly rigid and ritualistic. This budding agenda suited a church typology accommodating worship, civic rites of passage and festivals. The terminus for this tradition, I will argue, is Sydney Style's Liverpool 'Church of Humanity', which was active by the 1910s. After the schism at Chapel Street, which was caused partly by this move towards rigid ritualism, a breakaway group of Congreve's ex-followers established their own tradition in

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a new space. From the 1880s, Frederic Harrison's Newton Hall promoted a social programme of intellectual and humanitarian activities based on Comte's utopia. This tradition, I will argue, percolated into the comprehensive, civic activities of Patrick Geddes' Outlook Tower in Edinburgh, which was in operation from the 1890s.

### The Social Formations of Comte's Republican utopia

Since the late 1810s Comte had been an acolyte of Henri de Saint-Simon, the philosopher of the 'positive sciences'. Within a decade, he had taken the philosophy of his 'master' in a new, systematic and highly popular if controversial direction (Bazard and Enfantin 1958: 1-25, 228-43; Comte 1877: 549-69). By the 1830s, Comte had connected Saint-Simon's ideas to a new 'master-science' of sociology, which he cast as a response to the 'inevitable' events of the French and Industrial Revolutions. What Comte did was develop a scientific, historical survey as the basis of Positivist sociology. With this survey, he traced the chaos of his era back to the fall of Christian feudalism and the failure of metaphysics to balance social order and progress. Comte determined that the dual revolutions resulted from a five-century struggle to 'incorporate the proletariat into modern society'. A 'moral revolution'

would deliver closure thanks to a 'demonstrable faith' rooted in scientific thought (Comte 1876: 523).

Using 'sociological laws', Comte constructed a vision of society called the Positive Era (Comte 1877: 618-44). Sociologists, acting as comprehensive planners, would bring about the dawning age of Positivism. They would use sociology to coordinate science and industry for the improvement of the lot of humankind. To explain this process Comte composed a utopian manifesto called the 'Occidental Republic'. It included a new civil calendar and festivals (Fig. 1). Besides new flag and currency designs, it also explained a new pacific international policy. The programme likewise discussed the rights and duties of citizens in relation to the spaces of the city - a new religion, the 'Religion of Humanity' (Comte 1877). Comte believed that concerned individuals could use sociology to plan a global network of five hundred greenbelt city-state communities by the 1960s; indeed, it was a vision for the 'city of the future' (Alengry 1900: 261-69; Larizza-Lolli 2003: 221-28). A 'spiritual' intellectual elite - sociologists or the priests of modernity - would lead them in this process of social reorganisation.

Effectively, Comte linked his immaterial architecture to a material architecture. His Occidental Republic programme specified that between one million and three

**POSITIVIST CALENDAR: ADAPTED TO ALL YEARS EQUALLY;**  
OR,  
**CONCRETE VIEW OF THE PREPARATORY PERIOD OF MAN'S HISTORY.**

*Especially intended for the transition through which the Western Republic has to pass: the Republic which, since Charlemagne, has been formed by the free cohesion of the five leading populations—the French, Italian, Spanish, British, and German.*

Day of the Week	FIRST MONTH. MOSES. THE INITIAL THEOCRACY.	SECOND MONTH. HOMER. ANCIENT POETRY.	THIRD MONTH. ARISTOTLE. ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY.	FOURTH MONTH. ARCHIMEDES. ANCIENT SCIENCE.	FIFTH MONTH. CÆSAR. MILITARY CIVILISATION.	SIXTH MONTH. SAINT PAUL. CATHOLICISM.	SEVENTH MONTH. CHARLEMAGNE. FEUDAL CIVILISATION.
Mon.	1 Prometheus	1 Hesiod	1 Anaximander	1 Theophrastus	1 Mithras	1 St. Luke	1 Theobald the Great
Tues.	2 Hercules	2 Tyrtæus	2 Anaximenes	2 Herophilus	2 St. Cyril	2 St. Peter	2 Aloysius
Wed.	3 Orpheus	3 Anacreon	3 Heraclitus	3 Erasistratus	3 St. Athanasius	3 St. Athanasius	3 Otto the Great
Thurs.	4 Ulysses	4 Pindar	4 Anaxagoras	4 Celsus	4 St. Jerome	4 St. Jerome	4 St. Henry
Fri.	5 Lycurgus	5 Sophocles	5 Democritus	5 Galen	5 Neoplaton	5 St. Ambrose	5 Villiers
Sat.	6 Demetrius	6 Theocritus	6 Protagoras	6 Avicenna	6 Theodorus	6 St. John of Austria	6 Don John of Austria
Sun.	7 NUMA	7 ÆSCHYLUS	7 THALES	7 HIPPOCRATES	7 THEMISTOCLES	7 ST. AUGUSTIN	7 ALFRED
Mon.	8 Deia	8 Sappho	8 Socrates	8 Nicod	8 Pericles	8 Constantine	8 Charles Martel
Tues.	9 Socrates	9 Zeno	9 Xenophanes	9 Aristæus	9 Theodorus	9 Theodorus	9 Theodorus
Wed.	10 Meno	10 Lucian	10 Empedocles	10 Theophrastus	10 St. Chrysostom	10 St. Chrysostom	10 Richard I.
Thurs.	11 Cyrus	11 Pythagoras	11 Theophrastus	11 Hero	11 Procopius	11 St. Fulgentius	11 John of Arden
Fri.	12 Zoroaster	12 Epicurus	12 Archytas	12 Hippocrates	12 Philoponus	12 St. Genevieve	12 Albuquerqu
Sat.	13 The Druids	13 Apollonius	13 Apollonius of Tyana	13 Apollonius	13 Nicetas	13 St. Gregory the Great	13 Bayard
Sun.	14 BOUDDHA	14 PHIDIAS	14 PYTHAGORAS	14 APOLLONIUS	14 ALEXANDER	14 HILDEBRAND	14 GODFREY
Mon.	15 To Hi	15 Hippocrates	15 Aristotle	15 Eudæus	15 Junius Brutus	15 St. Benedict	15 St. Leo the Great
Tues.	16 Leo-Tien	16 Thales	16 Aristotle	16 Pythas	16 Camillus	16 St. Boniface	16 Gerbert
Wed.	17 Meng-Tsen	17 Terence	17 Zeno	17 Aristarchus	17 Publius	17 St. Adair of Seville	17 Peter the Hermit
Thurs.	18 The Theocrats of Tibet	18 Plutarch	18 Cleo	18 Eratosthenes	18 Hannibal	18 Landfranc	18 Suger
Fri.	19 The Theocrats of Japan	19 Epicurus	19 Epicurus	19 Eratosthenes	19 Scipio	19 St. Bernard	19 St. Elizabeth
Sat.	20 Marco Cæsar	20 Lucretius	20 Lucretius	20 Albatrogus	20 Scipio	20 St. Bernard	20 St. Elizabeth
Sun.	21 CONFUCIUS	21 ARISTOPHANES	21 SOCRATES	21 HIPPARCHUS	21 AUGUSTUS	21 ST. BERNARD	21 INNOCENT III.
Mon.	22 Abraham	22 Ennius	22 Nicolaus	22 Varro	22 Augustus	22 St. Francis	22 St. Elizabeth
Tues.	23 Samuel	23 Lucan	23 Philo of Alexandria	23 Columella	23 Augustus	23 St. Francis	23 St. Elizabeth
Wed.	24 Solomon	24 Horace	24 St. John the Evangelist	24 Virgilius	24 Hadrian	24 St. Theresa	24 St. Stephen
Thurs.	25 Isidore	25 Theophrastus	25 St. Clement of Alexandria	25 Theophrastus	25 Antoninus	25 St. Vincent	25 St. Elizabeth
Fri.	26 St. John the Baptist	26 Ovid	26 Origen	26 Plutarch	26 Trajan	26 Alexander	26 St. Elizabeth
Sat.	27 Isaac	27 Virgil	27 Plato	27 Flavius	27 TRAJAN	27 William Penn	27 St. Elizabeth
Sun.	28 MAHOMET	28 VIRGIL	28 PLATO	28 FLAVIUS	28 TRAJAN	28 BOSSUET	28 SAINT LOUIS
Mon.	1 The Troubadours	1 Marco Polo	1 Lope de Vega	1 Albertus Magnus	1 Marie de Medici	1 Copernicus	1 Copernicus
Tues.	2 Boccaccio	2 Jacques Cæsar	2 Muret	2 Roger Bacon	2 Roger Bacon	2 Kepler	2 Kepler
Wed.	3 Babelius	3 Vasco de Gama	3 Rabelais	3 St. Bonaventura	3 St. Bonaventura	3 Harpago	3 Harpago
Thurs.	4 Cervantes	4 Napier	4 Orway	4 Ramus	4 Ramus	4 James Bernoulli	4 James Bernoulli
Fri.	5 Le Fontaine	5 La Fontaine	5 La Fontaine	5 Montaigne	5 Montaigne	5 Bradley	5 Bradley
Sat.	6 De Foë	6 Cook	6 Leibniz	6 Campanella	6 Campanella	6 Voltaire	6 Voltaire
Sun.	7 ARIOSTO	7 COLUMBUS	7 CALDERON	7 ST. THOMAS AQUINAS	7 LOUIS XI	7 GALLILEO	7 GALLILEO
Mon.	8 Leonardo da Vinci	8 Benvenuto Cellini	8 Tasso	8 Hobbes	8 L'Hopital	8 Vieta	8 Vieta
Tues.	9 Michael Angelo	9 Amos	9 Voltaire	9 Pascal	9 Bernoulli	9 Wallis	9 Wallis
Wed.	10 Holbein	10 Harrison	10 Racine	10 Locke	10 Guericke	10 Galvani	10 Galvani
Thurs.	11 Poussin	11 Deland	11 Voltaire	11 Vauvenargues	11 De Witt	11 Euler	11 Euler
Fri.	12 Velasquez	12 Alwayright	12 Schiller	12 Diderot	12 Newton	12 Lambert	12 Lambert
Sat.	13 Turner	13 Cervantes	13 Schiller	13 Campanella	13 Newton	13 Lagrange	13 Lagrange
Sun.	14 RAFFAEL	14 VANCANSON	14 CORNELIUS	14 LORD BAACON	14 WILLIAM THE SILENT	14 NEWTON	14 NEWTON
Mon.	15 Frauent	15 Savin	15 Alarcon	15 Grotius	15 James	15 Borelli	15 Borelli
Tues.	16 Danzaco	16 Lucan	16 Marston	16 Fontenelle	16 Fontenelle	16 Bernoulli	16 Bernoulli
Wed.	17 The Spanish Renaissance	17 Pulpin	17 Pulpin	17 Vico	17 Masarin	17 Cavendish	17 Cavendish
Thurs.	18 Shakespeare	18 Shakespeare	18 Shakespeare	18 Leibniz	18 Leibniz	18 Guyton	18 Guyton
Fri.	19 Walter Scott	19 Joubert	19 Joubert	19 Montesquieu	19 Montesquieu	18 Bernoulli	18 Bernoulli
Sat.	20 Milton	20 Milton	20 Milton	20 Buffon	20 Buffon	18 Bernoulli	18 Bernoulli
Sun.	21 TASSO	21 WAT	21 MOLENE	21 MOLENE	21 CROMWELL	21 GALL	21 GALL
Mon.	22 Petrus	22 Bernard de Palissy	22 Pascal	22 Roberson	22 Sidney	22 Harvey	22 Harvey
Tues.	23 Thea	23 Gagliardini	23 Sacchini	23 Adam Smith	23 Franklin	23 Boerhaave	23 Boerhaave
Wed.	24 Maria de Laky	24 Dahnmet	24 Gluck	24 Kant	24 Washington	24 Linnæus	24 Linnæus
Thurs.	25 Pauline	25 Bousquet	25 Beethoven	25 Condorcet	25 Jefferson	25 Haller	25 Haller
Fri.	26 Klopstock	26 Montgolfier	26 Rossini	26 Joseph de Maistre	26 Bolivar	26 Lamarck	26 Lamarck
Sat.	27 Byron	27 Mozart	27 Mozart	27 Hume	27 Cromwell	27 Darwin	27 Darwin
Sun.	28 MILTON	28 MOZART	28 MOZART	28 HUME	28 CROMWELL	28 DARWIN	28 DARWIN

NOTE.—In Leap-years the first of March and all subsequent days will coincide with the day following that to which they are placed opposite in this Calendar. The names in Italics are those of the persons who, in Leap-years, take the places of their Principals.

Figure 1: Positivist Calendar. It was designed by Comte during the late 1840s as part of his Occidental Republic programme, which had the purpose of guiding the transformation of France, Italy, Spain, Britain and Germany into the city-states of the Positive Era. Reprinted from Comte (1877: 348).

million people would inhabit each city-state. Each of these regional republics would contain a land area comparable to Belgium. Secular 'spiritual' institutions would make and maintain the ideal urban fabric of the regional republic. The most important of these institutions was the Positivist temple, the intellectual home of the Positivist sociologist (Fig. 2). During the 1848 Revolution, Comte drafted blueprints for at least two kinds of temples. He tailored one for a mother city, which included a nave seating 5,000 worshipers and a choir of 1,000. The second kind of temple was for a 'general' town. It was designed

to accommodate 2,000 worshipers and a choir of 500. These Positivist temples would serve as the hub of the regional community. Comte suggested a planning ratio of one city temple per urban unit of 35,000 people. The scheme is comparable to the scale, and social machinery, of Ebenezer Howard's Garden City.

Like Roman basilicas, Comte's temple scheme did not include a transept. But similar to a medieval Christian church, buttresses flanked the nave. Each of the 10m wide bays he dedicated to the heroes of Humanity, such as Aristotle, Charlemagne, Gutenberg, Shakespeare and

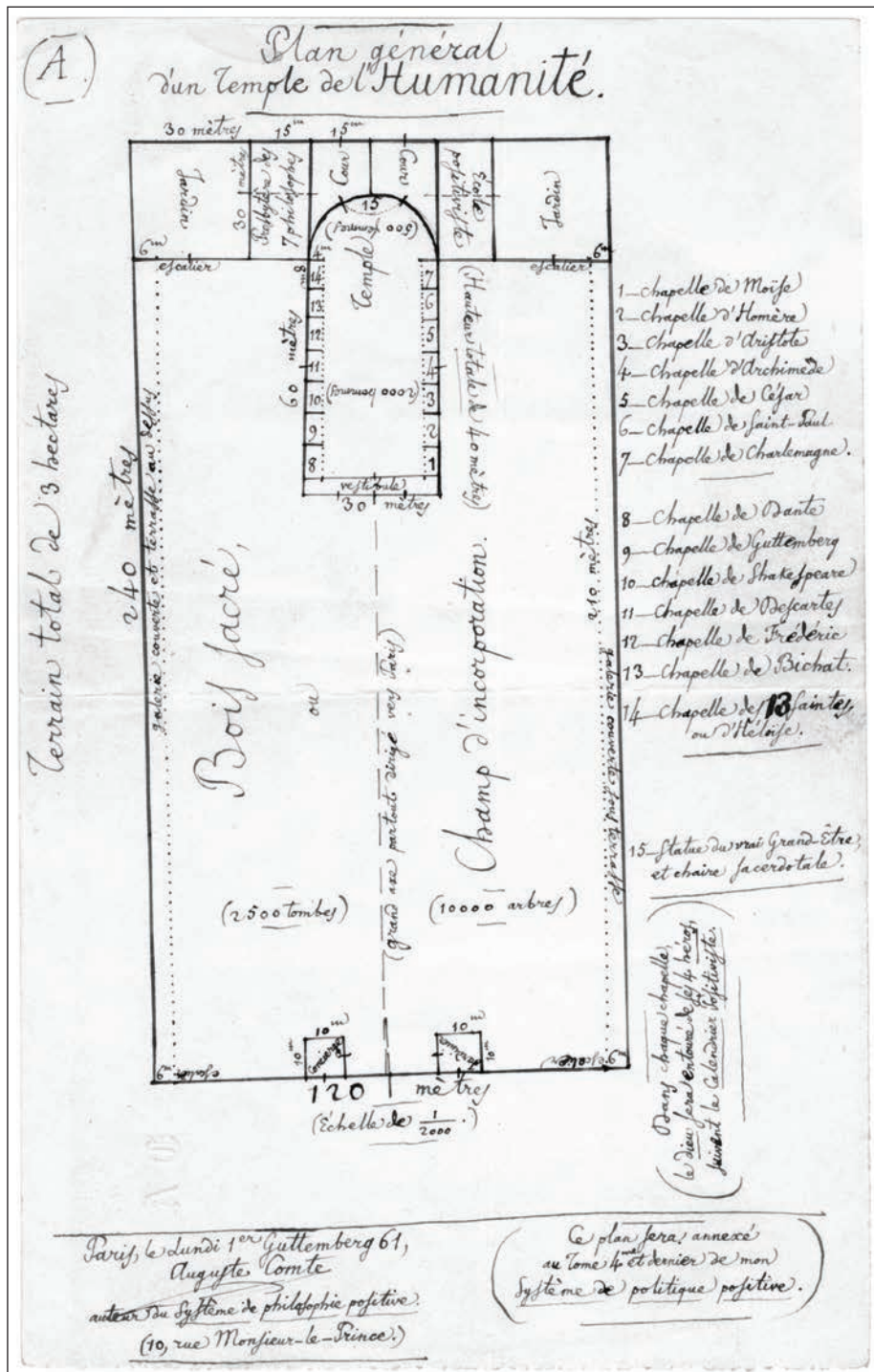


Figure 2: 'Temple of Humanity' Plan, designed by Comte during the 1848 Revolution. Note the relationship between the side chapels and the Positivist Calendar in Figure 1. Courtesy of Maison d'Auguste Comte, M.COM.87.

so on. The chapels were arranged in a sequential order according to his new thirteen-month calendar, where each month was named after one of these heroes. Comte situated a 'choir of women' at the front of the temple near the apse, where there was to be a statue of a woman and child representing Humanity or 'the Great Being'. Outside the temple, behind the apse, Comte designed a garth flanked by a 'Positivist school' on the east and a 'presbytery of seven philosophers' on the west. The school was to contain a courtyard, a library and three rooms corresponding to three Positivist rites of passage Comte designed. The library would accommodate texts written by the heroic figures honoured in Comte's calendar. For the approach to the narthex, Comte designed a monumental urban armature; he labelled this route leading to the grand entrance of the edifice the 'Temple Avenue'. Flanking the avenue was to be a 'sacred forest' containing the tombs of the local 'eminent dead' (MAC, M.COM.87). All Positivist temples would align on an axis facing Paris, similar to the orientation of mosques in the direction of the Kaaba (Comte 1877: 139; Pickering 2009a: 477). These spatial formulae, as we will see, influenced the design of Positivist institutions in Britain, especially Style's Church of Humanity.

So, how were these spaces to be used? They would host celebrations of the feats of the global and local heroes of Humanity. But like the Roman tradition, Positivist temples were also to function as a basilica or large meeting hall. Here, the Positivists would provide education and organise 'social action' regarding the 'public thing'. The knowledge learnt was to be of a theoretical and practical nature. The Positivist temple would also host the dissemination of republicanism while promoting trade unionism and humanist research (Harrison 1965: 3–4, 210, 337–39; McGee 1931: vii, 39–129). An education in the history of the sciences and humanities was to provide an induction to affection, contemplation and cooperative action in public life. In this sense, the Positivist temple was a machine for transforming the dingy, downtrodden industrial town and countryside into an ideal republic.

Comte believed that the moralising pedagogy of Positivism encouraged citizens to build on the collective memory left by their ancestors, or what has been called a 'social inheritance' towards 'eutopia'-making (Branford and Geddes 1919: v–xvi, 35–7; Branford 1904: 104–56; Geddes 1915: 223, 315; Sociological Society 1905: 142). Comte's narrative on the human place in the world began with an account of the emergence of the rudimentary, cosmological sciences. The sciences evolved hierarchically and sequentially, from simple abstractions to concrete complexities. Astronomy, mathematics and geology intermingled and developed into physics, chemistry and biology. History and biology linked the fundamental sciences to the premier, complex human sciences of sociology and morality. It was understood that this 'classification of the sciences' evolved over time and helped to shape European society and its associations of individuals, families, cities and nations. Comte's idea of nested socio-scientific and spatial relationships, as we will see, proved important to the arrangement of Geddes' Outlook Tower. It is sufficient to say here that using these sciences the Positivists

surveyed and explained the world from a strictly human viewpoint (Comte 1875b: 297; Wilson 2013: 1–18).

With this training at the temple, then, citizen-sociologists would feel empowered to go out and investigate the cityscape. They would observe how communities emerged as an extension of their immediate natural environment. The various Positivist groups would then form sociological laws by comparing different communities' evolving social structures (Branford 1903: 145–62; *International Policy* 1866: 396, 426). Using these sociological laws, they could provide programmes and manifestos for urban social improvements. Positivist temples were intended to serve as sociological institutes that initiated the process of breaking-up empires into the city-states Comte envisioned (Claeys 2010: 114–15; Comte 1877: 432, 565; Comte 1875a: 73; Congreve 1900: 107–18).

Temples apart, Comte designed other 'spiritual institutions' to, again, bind town and country units into ideal regional republics. He designated the ideal ratio of such institutions per population and specified the four main civic types who would use them for realising structured social change. Intellectuals and Emotionals, or thinkers and artists, would take scientific and cultural roles. They would act as a new 'spiritual power' from within the temples, hospitals, schools and homes Comte designed. Chiefs and People, or moral capitalists and trade unionists, took political and economic roles. They would act as a new 'temporal power' from within the banks, exchanges, factories and fields Comte imagined. The Positivist sociologist Patrick Geddes called these groupings of citizen-types and architecture-types 'social formations'. Cooperating in a process of rule and ruling in turn according to their respective spaces, they would realize the city-states of the Occidental Republic (Branford and Geddes 1919: 35–38; Comte 1877; Swinny 1908: 102–21). The themes discussed above, as we will see, were expressed in Positivist institutions in Britain.

### Chapel Street Hall and Newton Hall

Richard Congreve was the founder of organised Positivism in Britain. Before the Oxford don left his career as an Anglican minister, he formed a close-knit group of followers. Three of Congreve's former Oxford students – Frederic Harrison, E.S. Beesly and J.H. Bridges – helped him to establish the movement in Britain. At their first meeting on 19 January 1859, Congreve stood beside the old desk in the stuffy classics-laden study of his Southfields, Wandsworth, London cottage. Before his students, he inaugurated the Positivist Society and the first 'Church of Humanity' in Britain. Although he had left the clergy, Congreve was still a preacher. He had converted to the 'faith of the future'. Their new Wandsworth church had a ritual, he maintained, and they would soon meet in a novel architecture.

From the 1860s, Congreve delivered Positivist lectures in the basement of a building on Cleveland Street in London. During this time, Congreve had been using historical and geographical types of surveys to collect sociological 'facts' (Harrison 1913: 193–98). With these facts, he contested British expansionism in his lectures and

pamphlets. Congreve was linking imperialism to the detriments of working and living conditions in London. His followers too called out the exploitation of people and landscapes at home and abroad after carrying out industrial and social surveys. Cumulatively, their activities followed Congreve's lectures, which came to be known as 'Systematic Policy'. This policy, which was based on Comte's cultural and political ideas, outlined the basis for a guardianship of nations and celebrated the festivals of the Positivist calendar (Martineau 1858: 305–50). The guardianship's purpose was to devolve all Western empires into a global network of republican city-states. Congreve published the lectures in 1869, two years after the Positivists had moved into their first proper urban intervention, which was called Chapel Street Hall (**Fig. 3**).

So, how did the Chapel Street Hall design reflect the immaterial and material architecture of Positivism? The hall was situated in the inner-city slums of London, amidst those suffering from chronic want. Undoubtedly, it aimed to facilitate the process of the 'incorporation of the proletariat into modern society' by providing a full education in Positivist thought and action (Comte 1876: 523). While the space was not a temple like Comte had drawn in 1848, several references to his temple design appeared here. At the front of the parlour was a platform on which stood an 'altar' (a wooden table), two lecterns and a pedestal with

a marble bust of Comte. A copy of Raphael's *Madonna di San Sisto*, a painting of the 'Great Being', hung on the wall above the altar alongside several marble tablets. The tablets commemorated members of the London society, such as the anti-imperialist James Cruickshank Geddes and the physician Evan Buchanan Baxter (**Fig. 4**). They were a substitute for the 'sacred forest' that Comte had drawn in his 1848 temple schemes. Along the side walls of this old parlour hung etchings of the thirteen monthly heroes of Humanity from the Positivist calendar. Chapel Street Hall also housed a complete library consisting of some 270 works that Comte deemed as a whole to be a meaningful alternative to disparate and desultory reading.

At the hall, Congreve officiated Sunday morning meetings and encouraged his Oxford alumni to implement his Systematic Policy. His strategy for implementing structured societal change was homes, schools, education, surveys and social action. This was a top-down and bottom-up strategy. He provided workers with an emotional identity by officiating at lectures, cultural festivals and civic rites of passage. His pupils learned to denounce the militancy of imperialism, the exploitation of workers and the indifference of the clergy. A 'common faith and common principles of action' would empower workers to bring 'moral pressure to bear upon the wealthy' (Congreve 1870; BL-PP, Add.MSS, 45,243: 3–9).



**Figure 3:** Chapel Street Hall, later known as the 'Church of Humanity', c. 1874. Courtesy of British Library of Political and Economic Science, London Positivist Society, 5/4.



**Figure 4:** Chapel Street Hall illustration, drawn by the Positivist illustrator Thomas Sulman, c. 1874. Courtesy of British Library of Political and Economic Science, London Positivist Society, 5/4.

The civic rites of passage Congreve administered at the hall adhered to the practices Comte had sanctioned from the civil services of republican Rome. They were for those who exhibited a 'decided preference of action to speculation, and its constant subordination of private to public life' (Comte 1877: 13, 266, 449, 541). These rites sought to give meaning to key stages in personal development in seven-year increments. Harrison explained that they prompted true citizens to accept their duties to 'the paramount claims of Humanity', which was perhaps a reference to environmental and social justice for colonial and local proletarian subcultures (Harrison 1907a: 293–94).

Congreve's old Oxford students increasingly spoke of the need to establish a 'People's School'. They believed that the 'great modifier of the inevitable social distinction is Education'. A Positivist school would 'destroy intellectual inequality' and 'obviate the deplorably brutalizing influences of our actual social order' (Congreve 1874: 375–83; Swinny 1920). As this represents the core of Comte's ideas, the language in context here was not 'conservative', as it

is sometimes claimed. Moreover, the Positivists' school would be 'free from the curse of privileged classes and churches [ . . . ] No class distinction. No sex difference. Universal. Gratuitous'. The pedagogy would promote 'unity in family, unity in classes, unity between nations, international, bringing the true social point of view . . . true republican bearing in the present [ . . . ] to meet actual wants and occasions' (BL-PP, Add.MSS, 45,243: 56–58).

The Positivists' 'free school' at Chapel Street Hall opened to forty pupils in April 1870. The curriculum entailed reading, writing and arithmetic. But Congreve wanted to reinforce 'complete' Positivism. It would thus include the gamut of the sciences, from mathematics to sociology to morality, and connect science to practical activities and social deeds. A 'complete' education would comprise the 'abstract and concrete worship' of 'Space, Earth and Humanity' (Comte 1877: 437; OUBL-CP, MS.Eng.lett.c.184: 1–3; OUBL-CP, MS.Eng.misc.d.489: 7). This education would augment pupils' powers of observing and reimagining their environs (Congreve 1900: 524). Chapel Street

Hall hosted outdoor studies, pilgrimages and social investigations as well as art lessons.

With its vigorous, multifaceted, systematic agenda, Chapel Street Hall was fraught with friction. The popular press continually decried the Positivists. Internal friction was unexceptional. During the late 1870s, Congreve stoked the fire by attempting to takeover the international Positivist movement. He viewed Comte's successor of the Positivist Society in Paris, Pierre Laffitte, as a lethargic leader. Congreve's attempts to undermine Laffitte shocked the Chapel Street group. Another source of friction was Congreve's view of Positivism as a ritualistic religion. Controversially, he affixed to the front of Chapel Street Hall a marble tablet engraved with the words 'The Religion of Humanity' (Bryson 1936: 343–62; Wright 1986: 79). Congreve's old Oxford students were not too keen on the idea of promoting themselves as the altar boys of a ritualistic church. They saw Chapel Street Hall chiefly as a 'debating society and scientific body' (BLPES-HP 1/7: 32). Even its newest visitors knew that a clash of unbending personalities was 'inevitable' (Liveing and Geddes 1926: 1–19).

So, for these reasons, the group dissolved into acrimony. In an angry array of letters, Congreve claimed that his peers lacked the pragmatic impetus to live the life of social action. He chose to lead a youthful group of 'co-religionists' and they called themselves the 'Church of Humanity'. Congreve did not resign from the active directorship of Chapel Street Church until the late 1880s. He then nominated

Sulman and the barrister Henry Crompton to take the lead (Congreve 1892: 882). The focus here became the development of Positivist liturgy, rituals, etc.

The splinter group led by Harrison practiced Positivism in a 'far more tentative and experimental way'. Their practice was supposedly free from the ritualistic rigidity of the 'Church of Humanity' (Harrison 1890: 5). Harrison repudiated the title of 'high priest'. The members of his Positivist hall actively defended themselves against the disparaging label of 'Comtist' (Low 1897: 116–19; Odgers 1897: 378–80). Annually, they published reports indicating how their group and activities were distinct from the religion of Chapel Street Church and growing strong (LPC 1882, 1884).

In 1881, Harrison and his colleagues took out a twenty-one year lease on a building owned by the Scottish Corporation. The edifice was located on Fleur-de-lis Court, Fetter Lane, London. Sir Isaac Newton, the president of the Royal Society, and Christopher Wren, the renowned architect, had purchased the land on which the hall was built (Harrison 1911: 267–8). The Positivists named the eighteenth-century building 'Newton Hall'. It might be added here that Comte's teacher Henri de Saint-Simon had discussed from the 1800s the formation of a 'Newtonian Elite'. Saint-Simon believed that these European savants could transform society via the positive science of 'social physiology' or what Comte later called 'sociology' (Durkheim 1962: 134; Saint-Simon 1868: 11–96).

Harrison was the lead designer of the hall's layout (Fig. 5), which was certainly indebted to Comte's temple



**Figure 5:** The interior of Newton Hall, London, 1906. Note the three axioms of Comte painted on the front wall, which make no reference to the 'Religion of Humanity'. Courtesy of British Library of Political and Economic Science, London Positivist Society, 5/4.

scheme of 1848. The long, rectangular room was painted celadon green; this was the 'colour of hope' – a suitable hue for 'emblems of the future' (Comte 1875a: 312). Four structural bays of cream-coloured composite-order pilasters articulated the space of the hall. Each bay contained a large arched window, and on each side of the window hung a marble bust of one of the thirteen heroes of Humanity. Three large wall panels divided the front wall of the room. On these panels, Harrison painted three axioms of Comte. The lines of text read, 'Order and Progress, Live for Others, Live Openly'; 'The Foundation, Order; The Principle, Love; the End, Progress'; and 'Family, Country, Humanity' (BLPES-LPS 5/4). There was no explicit reference to the 'Religion of Humanity' here. But under the lettering on the centre panel hung a copy of the painting *Madonna di San Sisto*. On a small platform in front of the panels stood a lectern and an organ, on which rested a bust of Comte. Harrison later had the organ replaced by a grand piano that Charles Darwin had once owned. At the back of the room (**Fig. 6**), one could find a 'Positivist Library for the 19th Century' (Harrison 1911: 267–68).

Newton Hall opened May 1, 1881. Here, Harrison (1894) explained that he acted on a framework of ideas he had devised while still under Congreve at Chapel Street Hall. This 'Social Programme' of 1872 entailed humanism, social investigation, education and urban social reform. Accordingly Newton Hall, Harrison (1902) said, was 'at once a Chapel, School, and Club'. Laffitte opened the Hall by administering civic rites of passage and delivering

lectures on sociology. Harrison organised discussions of the works of key sociologists, such as Frédéric Le Play (BLPES-LPS 1/2: 17, 108). Here, the Positivists also held music and art lessons; Vernon Lushington delivered lectures on Mozart and Shakespeare. Also at Newton Hall, members of a young Positivists' Guild comingled with trade union leaders (MAC, E.S. Beesly to Pierre Laffitte). The Positivists held festivals and debates here on atheism, Irish home rule, the Channel Tunnel development and Comte's *System*. Also in a humanitarian and intellectual nature, Harrison and his colleagues organised outdoor studies, social investigations and surveys, pilgrimages and women's groups. The lion's share of these activities complemented 'systematic classes' in geometry, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology and sociology. This pedagogy, again, was a preparation for the 'Service of Man', the fulfilment of 'human duties' such as speaking out against the imperialistic creed of commerce by canon (Harrison 1902: 97–113). Indeed, Newton Hall was much like the preschism Chapel Street Hall – albeit without the sonorous 'Amen' that followed Congreve's lectures.

Historians sometimes note that organised Positivism in Britain ineffectually lived and died in a blink of an eye. During the late nineteenth century, however, the British Positivists established some twelve regional centres, from Newcastle (**Fig. 7**) to London, and from Liverpool to Birmingham to Cambridge. The Newton Hall and the post-schism Chapel Street 'Church of Humanity' networks differed in their state of mind, language and typological use.



**Figure 6:** The interior back wall of Newton Hall, London, 1906. The 'Positivist Library' can be seen on the right hand corner. Courtesy of British Library of Political and Economic Science, London Positivist Society, 5/4.





**Figure 7:** The interior of the demolished Newcastle Temple of Humanity, undated. The letters 'A.C.' and 'C.V.' in the painted signs refer to Auguste Comte and the subject of his unrequited love, Clotilde de Vaux. Courtesy of British Library of Political and Economic Science, London Positivist Society, 5/4.

The groups affiliated with Chapel Street Hall, such as North and South American and Indian Positivists, acted on the words 'ritual', 'worship', 'priesthood' and 'Church of Humanity'; the Brazilian Positivists, in fact, were largely responsible for the making and maintenance of the Chapel of Humanity in Paris (**Fig 8**). Centres at Liverpool, Birmingham, Newcastle and Leicester also adopted Congreve's religious language. The Newton Hall centre was affiliated with the Paris Positivist Society as well as with North London, Manchester and other British groups. Congreve described those groups who identified with Newton Hall as advocating an inferior or 'incomplete' Positivism (Congreve 1900: 168–69, 869). They refrained from producing ritualistic spaces. Of the ritualistic Positivist groups in Britain, the most successful were the Liverpool Positivists. Yet, in their own way, they too were incomplete.

### The Liverpool Church of Humanity

During the late 1870s, the physician Thomas Carson formed a group in Liverpool to study Comte's works. They met at the Concert Hall on Lord Nelson Street and thereafter in the backroom of the Temperance Hotel at 179 Islington. The ex-chartist and Positivist convert Edmund Jones ran the latter. When he passed away, the group moved to a more permanent setting – a converted stable on Faulkland Street in 1883. Here, Carson inaugurated the 'Liverpool Church of Humanity', and Congreve administered the opening 'sermons'.

Surprisingly, the Liverpool Positivists seems to have shied from providing courses in the complete Positivist pedagogy. Nor did they enthusiastically engage in Positivist 'social action'. The group, Crompton admitted, cared not to polemicize against the contradictions



**Figure 8:** The interior of the Chapel of Humanity in Paris, which is managed by the Brazilian Positivists. Courtesy of Maison d'Auguste Comte.

of 'living in luxury upon the natural support of India's famished millions'. Instead, Positivist rituals upholding love and faith alone would generate a global confederation of autonomous provinces (Crompton 1903: 14–15). They accordingly became concerned with inward-looking, apolitical formalisms: readings, prayers and music. While the group is said to have been 'complete' and 'synthetic' in their activities (Crouch 2002: 162), they carried out a different kind of 'incompleteness'.

Following Carson's death the barrister Albert Crompton led the Liverpool Positivists until 1908. The solicitor Sydney Style took the lead for the next twenty-one years. After receiving a generous donation from the Crompton family, Style initiated a building program. By 1911, the group had acquired permission to build on 35 Upper Parliament Street, which was a site owned by the Liverpool City Council.

No Positivist group had hitherto taken on the task of designing an entire freestanding building in England. Style determined that the design would draw on Comte's 1848 scheme. It would also accommodate artwork commissioned for the Faulkland Street church (Wright 1986: 258). This included Jane Style's epic triptych called 'Magna Est Via Humanitatis', which depicted disparate religious leaders worshipping a woman and three children standing on an altar. The design would also accommodate a life-sized sculpture of the 'Great Being' by the acclaimed artist Benjamin Creswick.

During this time, the Positivist architect Edmund Rathbone took it upon himself to approach the esteemed Liverpoolian architecture professor Charles Reilly to develop a forward-thinking scheme. This was perhaps a response to a design already underway by W.H. Ansell, the future president of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). Rathbone had been especially impressed by Reilly's Church of St. Barnabas in London, which appeared in the *Architectural Review* of September 1910.

Reilly's proposal, which also appeared in the *Architectural Review*, took Positivist design aesthetics to new monumental, neoclassical heights. There were numerous deviations from Comte's 1848 scheme. The spatial layout comprised two lofty vaults supported by engaged pilasters in the Doric order (Fig. 9). A darkened transept divided these vaulted spaces. The western vault was designated for honouring the 'Old Religion'. The main feature in this pew-less space was the rear wall, where a large-scale statue of Moses stood on a plinth and pedestal. The arrangement mimics the design of Christian basilicas like Old St. Peter's, which included an open space to accommodate, edify and assimilate the unbaptised (LU-RP, D207/1/1(v)). Flanking each side of this 'Old Religion' space were four side-chapels. Reilly dedicated them to ancient and medieval heroes of Humanity (Fig. 10). The north end of the transept contained four side-chapels dedicated to key modern-era 'secular saints'. Here, Gutenberg, Shakespeare, Descartes and Frederick represented the four civic types discussed earlier – Chiefs, Emotional, Intellectuals and the People, respectively. The eastern vault was designated for the 'New Religion', but only two large side chapels flanked it. An

unprecedented fifteenth side-chapel was dedicated to Comte. The apse, which was modelled off the St. Barnabas design, was to contain a colossal statue of the 'Great Being' (LU-RP, D207/1/1(v)) (Fig. 11).

Reilly was proud of the 'prospective study' of the Church of Humanity design, and he personally sought to have it published in the *Architectural Review* (LU-RP, D207/2/3: 348). In the published critique that accompanied the drawings, Rathbone accused Reilly of expressing 'ideas of his own' rather than those authorised by the Positivists. This, and the criticism that the spaces were by no means intimate enough for the worship of Humanity, shocked Reilly. Above all, he was also 'very disappointed' that the publishers omitted drawings that would have parried Rathbone's critique (LU-RP, D207/2/3: 459).

Notwithstanding, Rathbone noted that the design 'idealised Humanity from the civic side'. Here, 'civic pomp and ceremonial could be raised to the rank of a religious cult, as it was in the times of the Greeks and Romans' (Rathbone 1911: 148–50). The cost to build Reilly's immense church probably would have dented both the treasury of Trajan and the Delian League. Reilly had too many other troublesome projects that he could not 'keep pace' with anyway (LU-RP, D207/2/3: 441). The Liverpool Positivists instead had already appointed Ansell to design and build the Liverpool Church of Humanity. Before the grand 'consecration' of the church in 1913, a double murder in the basement, stemming from a case of unrequited love, shook the group to its core ('Two Murders').

Ansell's was a grave architecture. It was important, remarks the historian Nikolas Pevsner (2006: 361), for being a 'stark brick building' with 'few historicist details'. Significantly, after all, it was built decades before modernism hit Britain by storm at Bexhill on Sea. From the street, the south elevation responds to the hardened urban grain. An asymmetrical massing of brick forms conveys an industrial manufactory aesthetic (Fig. 12). The quasi-baroque segmented parapets that flank the pediment complement a thoroughly modern design. A soft, cream-coloured limestone niche, capped with an open pediment, is centred on the temple façade (Figs. 13, 14). When the building opened, the niche housed a statue of the 'Great Being'. Heavy brick buttresses, reminiscent of the pistons of an industrial engine, bring order to the side entrance elevation. If it had been plastered and painted a Mendelsohn crème or Pawson white, it would probably be remembered today.

Positivist modern eclecticism seeps through to the interior spaces. Five bays of exposed loadbearing brick buttresses order the temple. Along the passing aisle and between these buttresses Ansell hung busts of the great heroes of Humanity. A life-sized statue of the 'Great Being' rested on a pedestal in the apse in a fashion reminiscent of Constantine's statue at the Basilica Nuova. Above the statue rose a semi-circular baldachin, supported by Byzantine columns (BLPES-LPS 5/4) (Fig. 15).

The underside of the plastered baldachin dome depicted star constellations and a bordering trim of wheat, birds and grapes. The plastered barrel-vaulted ceiling of the

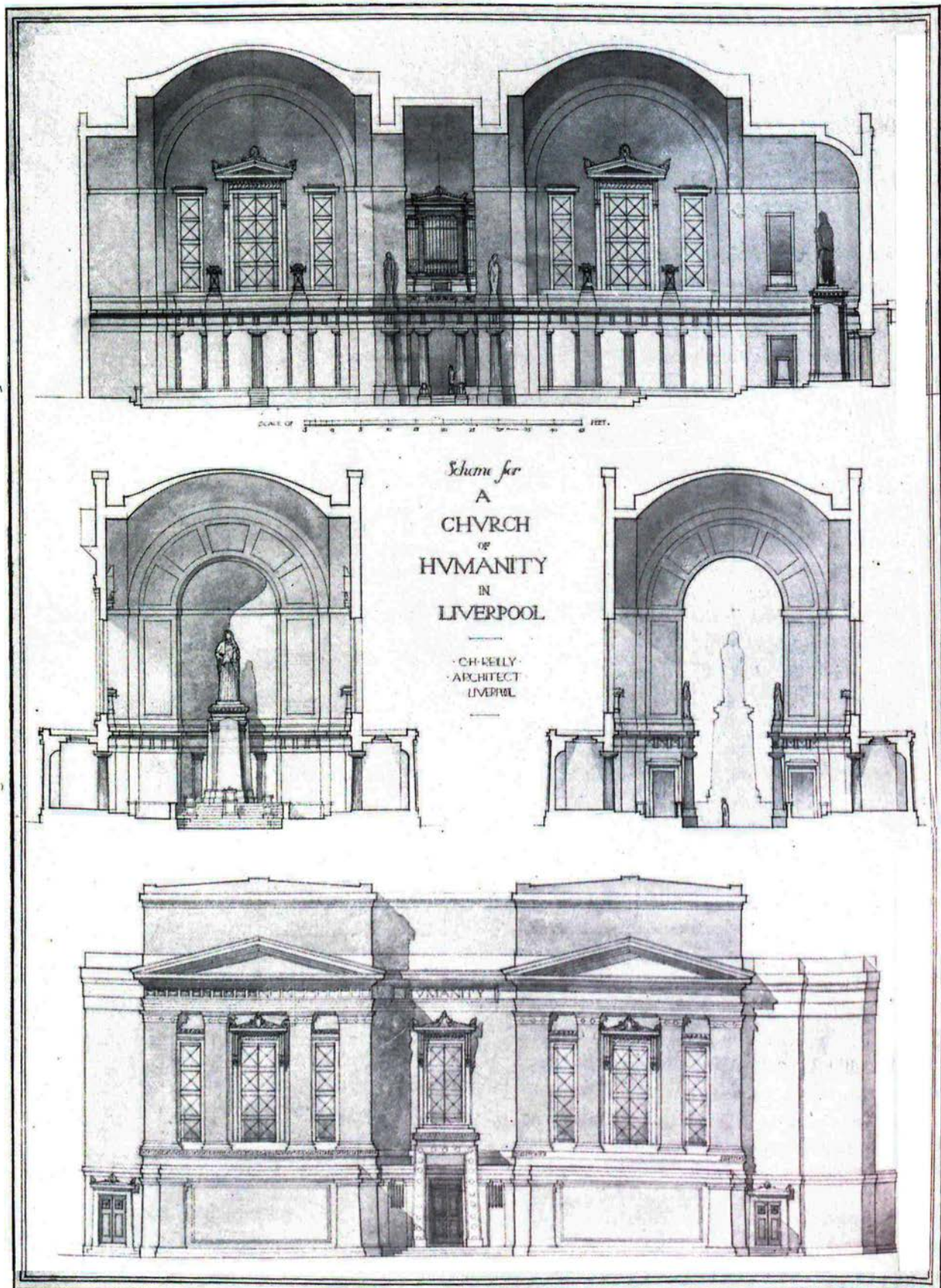
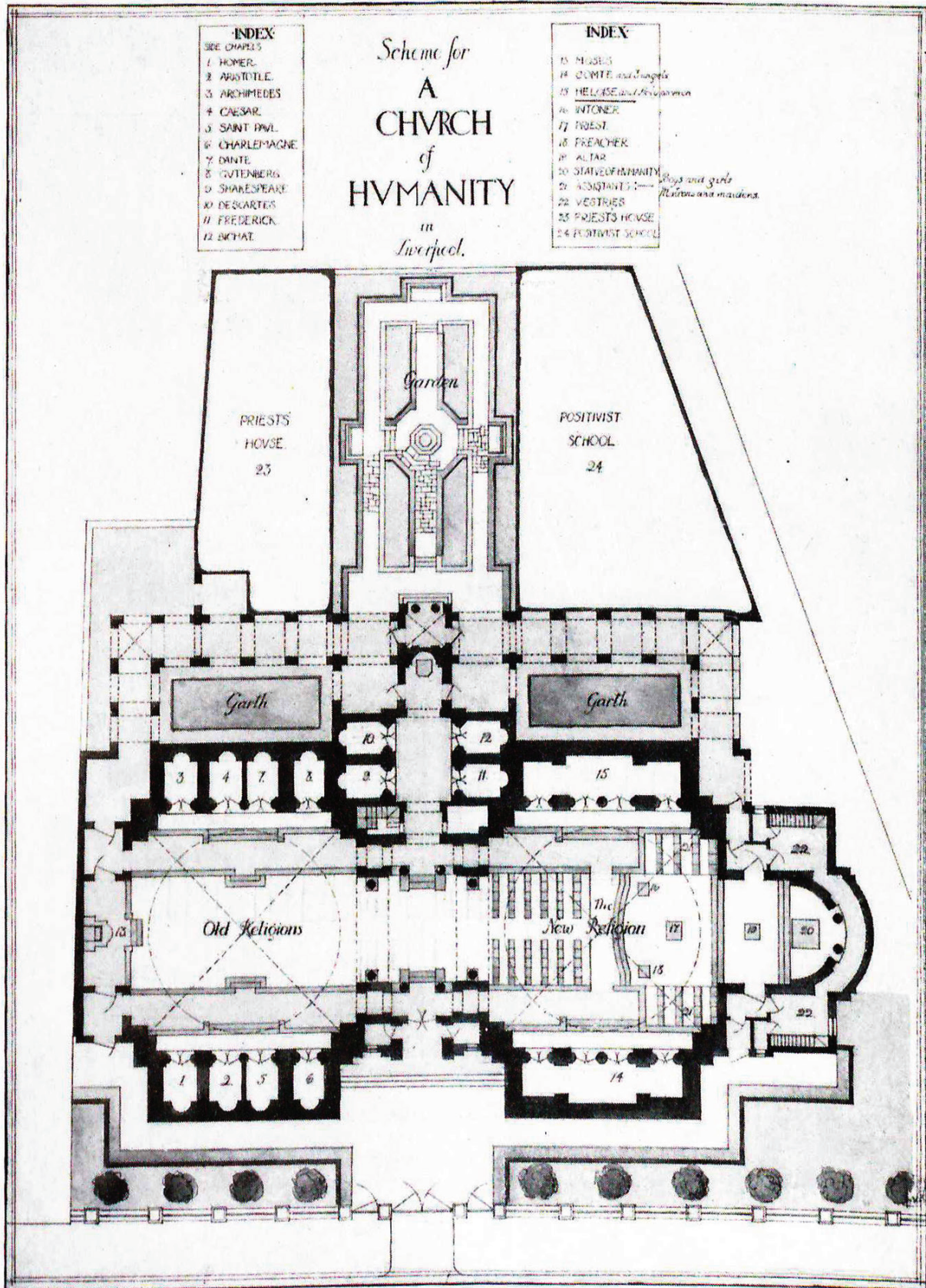
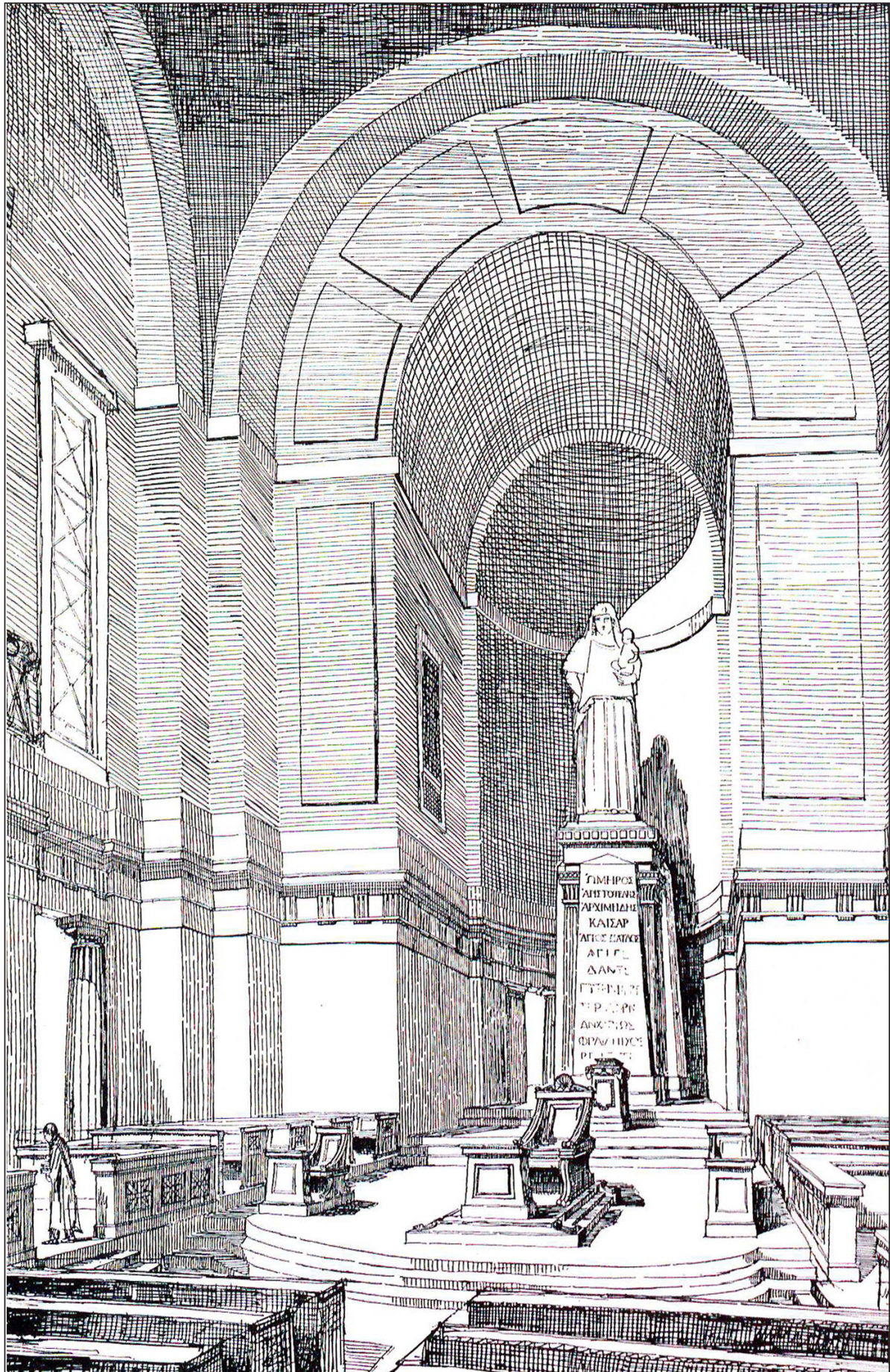


Figure 9: Liverpool Church of Humanity proposal section and elevations, designed by Charles Reilly. Reprinted from Rathbone (1911: 148–50).



**Figure 10:** Liverpool Church of Humanity proposal plan, designed by Charles Reilly. Note the relationship between the side chapels and the Positivist Calendar, Fig. 1. Here, one can see that chapel 14 is dedicated to Comte. Reprinted from Rathbone (1911: 148–50).



**Figure 11:** Liverpool Church of Humanity proposal apse perspective, showing the 'Great Being'. Reprinted from Rathbone (1911: 148–50).



**Figure 12:** Liverpool Church of Humanity (now St. Pius X Church), designed by W. H. Ansell. Photo by KayDawn Wilson (2014).



**Figure 13:** Liverpool Church of Humanity (now St. Pius X Church). Photo by KayDawn Wilson (2014).



**Figure 14:** Liverpool Church of Humanity (now St. Pius X Church), view across Upper Parliament Street. Photo by KayDawn Wilson (2014).



**Figure 15:** Liverpool Church of Humanity, postcard of the apse and the statue of the woman and child representing Humanity, c. 1913. Courtesy of British Library of Political and Economic Science, London Positivist Society, 5/4.

nave received a similar relief patterning. The references here were bread, wine and astronomy, the latter being Comte's first fundamental science. An arcade of segmental terra cotta arches supports the barrel-vaulted nave, which accommodated approximately two hundred worshippers. The same terra cotta arch treatment is seen above the metal Diocletian windows that punctuate the exposed brick clerestory. The eclectic design reflected the architectural contributions that various cultures made to human civilisation.

Ansell's design sustained a mixed reception. The Diocletian windows provided 'inadequate light', critics complained (Wright 1896: 258). Ansell failed to use the buttress to make the building soar to light and airy Gothic heights. Others commented that the assortment of styles employed in the design expressed a 'want of unity'. Reviewers at the Architecture Club Exhibition commented on the parts rather than the whole; Ansell's design, they noted, held 'many points of great excellence' (Powys 1925: 197–99). With the interior brickwork left exposed, critics felt that the modern edifice appeared to be unfinished. Notwithstanding, Jane Style remarked that the temple's 'beauty and dignified simplicity is recognised across the Atlantic' (Style 1928: 198). Ansell proudly presented photos of the building to professional audiences well into the 1930s.

The Liverpool Positivists found it difficult to attract new members. They continued to claim in their liturgical advancements that the 'Virgin-Mother Humanity' had created God, Mary and Jesus (Argyrou 2005: 131). The

group closed their doors in 1947. One ideological Oz soon replaced another. The Third Church of Christ Scientist bought and converted the building within two years' time. The edifice was designated as a Grade II listed building in 1975, meaning that the British government considers it of special historic and architectural interest, meriting every effort to ensure its preservation. Recently, in 2013, St. Pius X Catholic Church repaired and refurbished the building. The Stations of the Cross now supersede the heroes of Humanity in the passing aisles; a statue of Mary and baby Jesus, representing the creed of Christianity, take the place of the 'Great Being', representing Humanity or the sum total of human civilisation (Figs. 16, 17).

### The Outlook Tower

Arguably, the Scottish sociologist Patrick Geddes forged the institutions with the strongest intellectual and humanitarian links to Positivism. Historians and sociologists have made it their undying effort to disassociate Geddes from 'Comtism'. But resistance is futile. Geddes commended Congreve as 'Oxford at its best' (Liveing and Geddes 1926: 1–2). After maintaining a personal relationship with Congreve for years, Geddes reflected that his mentor's intellectual impact on him was a 'revelation'. Congreve referred to Geddes as 'my prospect' – a potential leader of a Scottish Positivist Society (OUBL-CP, MSS.Eng.lett.c.186: 98–146; OUBL-CP, MSS.Eng.lett.e.57: 136–39). After the schism, Geddes (1888: 20) referred to Harrison as a true 'moral teacher'. He not only was elected as a lifetime member of the Newton Hall group but he



**Figure 16:** Interior of St. Pius X Catholic Church, formerly the Third Church of Christ Scientist but originally the Liverpool Church of Humanity. Photo by KayDawn Wilson (2014).





**Figure 17:** Interior of St. Pius X Catholic Church, view towards the statue of Mary and baby Jesus. Photo by KayDawn Wilson (2014).

also defended his fellow Positivists in the popular press. He taught his children to venerate Humanity (BLPES-LPS 1/1: 1–4; Pickering 2009b: 571).

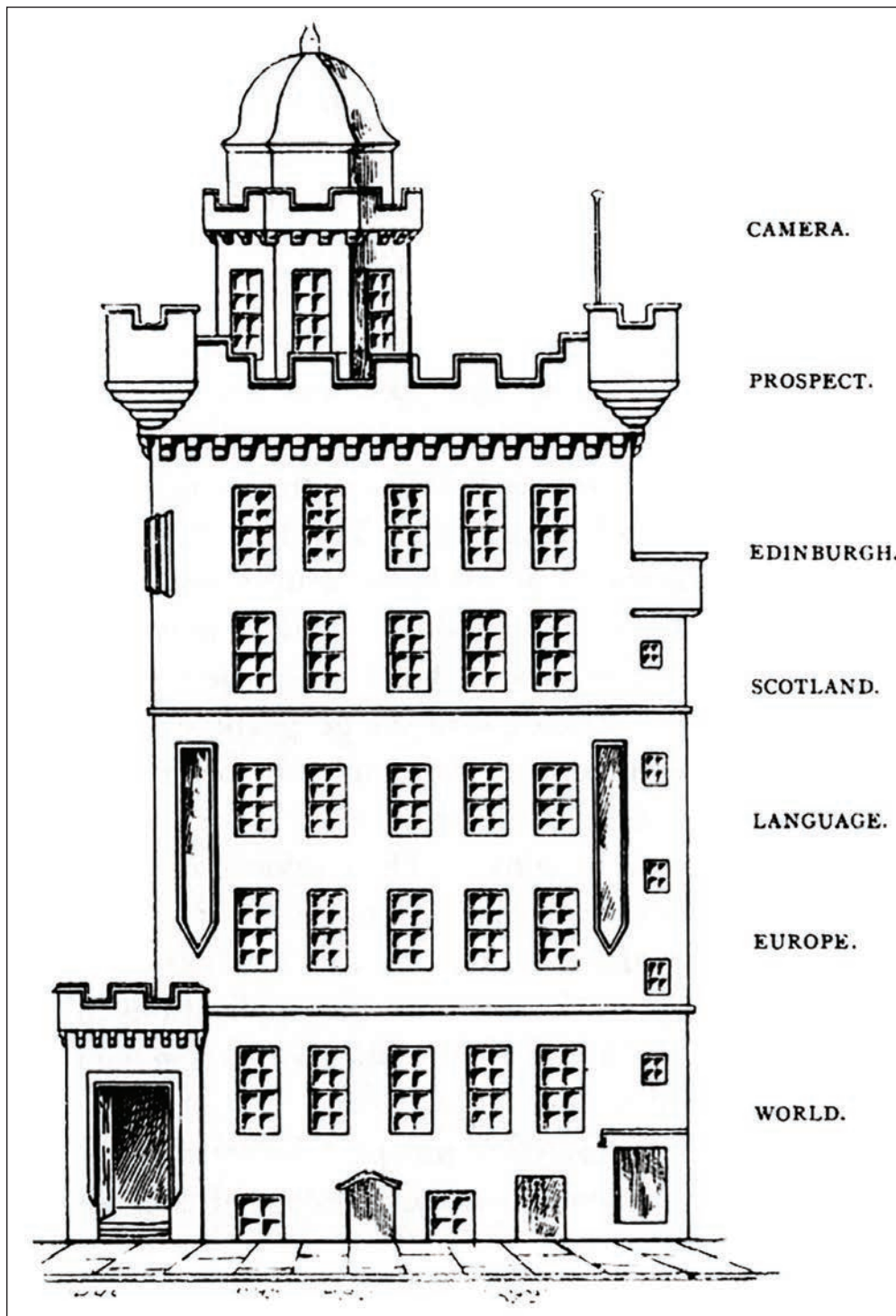
So, what did Geddes find to be so attractive about Comte's work? Comte held that the study of the townscape linked thought, feeling and action. The sociological survey practice could empower citizens to take social action. It would spread from town to town, making republic by republic. Like Comte, Geddes believed that Positivist sociologists should hold 'moral and physical' providence over 'civic hygiene'. They should engage with the 'Sociological Morality' of the streets (Comte 1875a: 539–40; Geddes 1887: 53–56).

From the 1890s, then, Geddes and his colleagues conducted surveys of ten acres of derelict sites and ghettos in the Edinburgh Old Town. Using the cooperative method, Geddes' comprehensive design firm, 'Patrick Geddes & Colleagues', appropriated several spaces for what Geddes (1918: 161) later called 'antiseptis and conservative surgery'. They aimed to spur the district's conversion into a more liveable environment. His team repaired and revamped Ramsay Lodge, Riddle's Court mansion and other University Hall residences. The institution that perhaps best embodies Geddes' work was the Outlook Tower.

In 1892, Geddes purchased Short's Observatory, which is located at the top of Edinburgh's historic High Street. Patrick Geddes & Colleagues refurbished and renamed it. Here, at the Outlook Tower, they offered a host of services, including sociological surveys, landscape architecture, city

planning, museum design, and literary services – all generally guided by Positivist principles. The Outlook Tower was described as being at once an observatory, library, gallery, museum and school (Jackman 1901: 54–68). Others simply called it the 'world's first sociological laboratory' and a 'temple of geography' (Withers 2001: 225; Zueblin 1899: 591).

What is important here is not the Outlook Tower's architectural details but its spatial organisation. Geddes dedicated each floor of the tower to the study of different nested levels of social relations (Scott and Bromley 2013: 90–1) (**Fig. 18**). Arguably, this organisation reflected Comte's Positivist pedagogy based on a classification of the sciences, from astronomy to morality, as discussed earlier. The Tower's musty basement rooms offered displays of the simplest and abstract basis of Humanity – an 'outline classification of the arts and sciences'. The first floor contained rooms depicting the history of Europe. An offering of an 'outline geography of the English-speaking world' could be found on the second floor. There were rooms dedicated to the United States, Europe and the British Empire. The occasional bust of an important intellectual was on display here. The third floor contained the findings of a historical and social survey of Scotland as an 'element of greater nationality'. A museum of Scottish cities, chiefly Edinburgh, could be found on the fourth floor. Above that was the open air 'prospect' on which stood a turret with a 'Camera Obscura' for taking in sweeping views of the Old Town. Geddes described this piece as 'an old-fashioned



**Figure 18:** Outlook Tower, elevation, with the interior organisation to the right. The Tower was used as an observatory, summer school and Encyclopaedia Civica exhibit. Reprinted from Geddes (1915: 324).

instrument, but of great educational future, geographic and artistic alike' (Geddes 1899: 945–48). Indeed, Geddes felt that true transformation was to begin with education.

In 1896, the Outlook Tower became the home to the Edinburgh Summer Meeting, a course in popular education. Geddes' faithful colleague Victor Branford explained that this course 'might almost be called a positivist school' because it closely followed Comte's systematic, 'sociologic teaching' (Branford 1893: 215–30). Here, Geddes and Branford guided sociological surveys for collecting

positive 'facts' regarding nature and society. The Outlook Tower soon exhibited the results of these activities, which they called an 'Encyclopaedia Civica'.

The Encyclopaedia Civica comprised historic illustrations, photographs, maps, plans, sections, diagrams and models organised in the spatial arrangement described above. The encyclopaedia depicted the positive interrelations between city, region, nation and globe. Geddes wrote that this information was arranged in the Tower according to a 'detailed synergy of orderly actions'. He believed that

the Outlook Tower and its spaces provided evidence for 'positively laying down geographical and social laws' of an ethical community (Geddes 1898: 580–86).

Like Comte's temple scheme, Geddes thought that each region should contain this kind of 'Civic Society' or a 'Civicentre for sociologist and citizen' (Sociological Society 1906: 92–93; Geddes 1913: 78–94). In a concerted fashion, citizen-sociologists would concentrate on the 'wholesale organisation' of 'social life'. The aim here was not to imagine the Occidental Republic, but to make it. The aim was therefore to act on Positivist ideas in a pragmatic fashion. He sought to use the Tower to organise the 'productive energies' and constructive 'possibilities of peace'. He and his followers thought of the Outlook Tower as the nucleus of an autonomous city-region (Geddes 1895: 1–28, 47; Mumford 1922: 233; Comte 1875b: 302–306; Comte 1877: 257–95). The sociological survey was the means to establish a rational, regional constitution. Like Comte, Geddes supported 'sociocracy', meaning 'rule by sociology' (Gane 2006: 7).

Effectively, the true purpose of the Outlook Tower was to prepare and present Encyclopaedia Civica (Geddes 1899: 945–48). The survey findings would help to diagnose the symptoms of decay or despondency within the region. Thereafter, citizen-sociologists would create a civic programme or 'Policy of Culture' (Geddes 1904: 1–3, 20–35, 210–21). These programmes would restructure the relationships between individuals, institutions and their environment. They would, in Positivist fashion, include festivals and pageants celebrating Humanity as well as town planning and cooperative exhibitions demonstrating practical urban social reforms (Desch 1913: 10–13). This iterative survey-design process would lift workers from a state of 'slavery to nature into an increasing mastery' over the natural world (Geddes 1898: 580–86).

Geddes' work made a significant impact on the design professions. The RIBA Town Planning Conference of 1910 included a special exhibit of the Encyclopaedia Civica from Geddes' Outlook Tower. At the conference, Geddes presented the sociological survey as a preparatory for comprehensive planning. Like his Positivist colleagues, he thought of the survey as a republican form of 'concrete politics' (Geddes 1911: 537–57; Bridges 1904: 198–203).

From the 1910s, Geddes' Encyclopaedia Civica was presented as a model cities exhibit that toured the world. After being commissioned to lead sociological surveys, he developed university, temple, exhibition, housing and landscape schemes. He sought, during this time, to create a network of institutions like the Outlook Tower. Following Comte's schema of 'social formations', Geddes was designing 'spiritual institutions'. In 1917, he and Branford acknowledged that they considered Comte's *System* to be a 'practical treatise' for post-war reconstruction (Branford and Geddes 1917: 52).

During the 1920s, Geddes took to the *Positivist Review* to reprimand his colleagues. It's not surprising when we recall what the Liverpool Positivists' activities had devolved into. Geddes lamented that the Positivist network was no longer advancing Comte's scientific principles (Geddes

1921: 145–49). He nevertheless continued to develop Comte's ideas. During the late 1920s, he asserted that the 'man in the street is far more of a positivist than he knows' (Living and Geddes 1926: 9).

## Conclusion

We set out in this essay to trace the history of the immaterial and material architecture of organised Positivism in Britain. We saw that after the 1878 schism the network linked to Congreve's Chapel Street Church put emphasis on religious ritualism and cultural festivals. The natural terminus for this theory and practice was a temple typology, as seen in the case of the Liverpool Church of Humanity. The breakaway group associated with Harrison's Newton Hall coveted intellectual and humanitarian activities over rigid ritualism. The Harrisonian tradition culminated in a synthetic, multi-function hall typology, as seen in the case of the Outlook Tower. Although keeping to the etymology of 'religion' – seeking to bind community – the two groups enacted their intentions in different ways, thus using different spatial and syntactical types. That intention, we will recall, was social reorganisation.

## Competing Interests

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

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