



## Ulster's Evangelical Plain Style: A Visual Inquiry

Miller, K., Montgomery, I., & O'Hara, C. (2023). Ulster's Evangelical Plain Style: A Visual Inquiry. *Architecture and Culture*, 1-21. [RFAC 2153543]. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20507828.2022.2153543>

[Link to publication record in Ulster University Research Portal](#)

**Published in:**  
Architecture and Culture

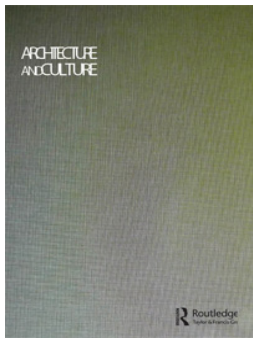
**Publication Status:**  
Published online: 23/02/2023

**DOI:**  
[10.1080/20507828.2022.2153543](https://doi.org/10.1080/20507828.2022.2153543)

**Document Version**  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

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To cite this article: Kevin Miller, Ian Montgomery & Catherine O'Hara (2023): Ulster's Evangelical Plain Style: A Visual Inquiry, Architecture and Culture, DOI: [10.1080/20507828.2022.2153543](https://doi.org/10.1080/20507828.2022.2153543)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/20507828.2022.2153543>



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Published online: 23 Feb 2023.



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# ARCHITECTURE AND CULTURE

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**Keywords:** evangelical  
architecture, mission hall,  
gospel hall, Northern Ireland,  
Ulster, vernacular,  
photography, metadata



pp. 1–21  
DOI:10.1080/20507828.  
2022.2153543

No potential conflict of  
interest was reported by  
the author.

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## Ulster's Evangelical Plain Style: A Visual Inquiry

Kevin Miller , Ian Montgomery and  
Catherine O'Hara

**ABSTRACT** The paper explores the design of the small evangelical halls that exist across the nine counties of Ulster. Conceived of as conduits to salvation, as representing the current non-material iteration of God's holy temple, and even as prefiguring the coming eschaton, these are simple and unassuming buildings, decorated largely with text. The paper argues that the "plain style" provides a fruitful approach to consideration of the materiality of these spaces. Plain style is defined as a complex denial of ostentation and elaboration in design and communication that is linked to reformed Protestantism. Contending that such a plain style must engage with the quotidian and the contingent, the importance and the problems of photo-documentation as a method of inquiry are discussed. The paper argues that a careful and reflexive approach to photography and analysis, drawing on keywording and metadata provides a method suitable for exploration of such "new" spaces where access must be negotiated with care. The paper concludes by presenting some findings drawn from a keywording approach to the visual data and relating the use of text, materials and building forms to discussion of an everyday plain style.

## Introduction

Scattered on roadsides, at crossroads, on terraced city streets, in urban cul-de-sacs, suburban developments, and in the corners of fields, a network of religious halls can be found across the nine counties of Ulster. These are typically small buildings erected by independent groups as a lay-led alternative to, or addition to, the mainstream Protestant denominations (Figure 1). The popular evangelical, often fundamentalist, religion synonymous with such places is associated with the development and growth of a powerful “pan-protestant” identity in Northern Ireland over the course of the 19th and 20th Centuries.<sup>1</sup> However, many are now in a precarious position, with just a few elderly members. As such, these are buildings that objectivize complex and diverse forces in the region's culture, politics and history. This paper contextualizes these halls within a “plain style” of design and discusses the development of a photographic archive as a method for studying them that depends on the notion of a plain style.

## Meeting Houses

Harold Turner provides a two-part typology that illuminates many of the important spatial changes that accompanied the new liturgical and theological approaches of the Protestant Reformation.<sup>2</sup> Turner contrasts



**Figure 1**  
The view from the perspective of the speaker in a Belfast mission hall. Image © The author, 2021.

two types: a “domus dei” – primarily a place for God on earth, a sacred place demarcated from ordinary life for divine purposes; and a “domus ecclesia” – “not a house for the god, but a house for the people of the god.”<sup>3</sup> This second “meeting house” type reflects the New Testament conception of the Church as a community of believers guided by the Bible and provides a setting for Reformed worship.<sup>4</sup> Produced through both alterations to existing churches and through the creation of new ones, the spaces of the domus ecclesia style of Protestant meeting house emphasized the pulpit, where preachers faced their congregations, delivering biblical exposition and offering direct access to the words of the gospel. Interior space, formerly divided into space for clergy and space for laity, was unified.<sup>5</sup> Churches were designed so that “nothing would be hidden from the people.”<sup>6</sup> Images and sculptural ornament were typically removed:

... in “purified” churches Protestant congregations heard simplified services which centered not upon the ritual of Communion but upon the minister’s reading and interpretation of the Bible from his new pulpit in the nave.<sup>7</sup>

This “plain style” of church building was a radical departure, sometimes violent and seemingly destructive. Yet, as Peter Auksi describes, it allowed a new model in which mediation between people and their God was reduced and the community of the church was emphasized:

Plainness in expression enables audiences to measure without distraction the spiritual, moral quality of the agent; to attend to the substance as opposed to the mere covering of expression; and to concentrate on their relationship to the prime giver of the gifts being enjoyed, God (Figure 2).<sup>8</sup>

### **A Popular Plain Style**

There is, as David Brett notes, no intrinsic relationship between the plain, image-less style and the removal of authority. Changes were as frequently “top-down” as “bottom-up.”<sup>9</sup> Yet the ways in which ostentation in design is bound up with respect for hierarchical orders have often made it a political process.<sup>10</sup> There appears to be a relationship in Ulster between views on plainness in settings for worship, and the ground-up involvement in religious practice that accompanies evangelicalism and that contributed to the development of a pan-protestant identity over the course of the 19th and 20th Centuries. Debates in the Church of Ireland for instance, reveal tensions that set its structures of authority against popular opinion. 19th Century “tractarian” attempts to introduce more ornamented gothic revival styles met with resistance from evangelicals who considered such efforts to be a threat that distracted from the real



**Figure 2**

A set of photographs from the photographic archive produced by selecting keyword: "exterior: primary façade". Images © the author, 2021.

business of reaching the unchurched poor of the burgeoning industrial city of Belfast.<sup>11</sup> In these debates evangelical ministers were supported by popular opinion against their Bishop. In the 1890s, protestors gathered outside St. Clements Iron Church on the Beersbridge road in East Belfast, complained of locked doors, the "screened off and gated chancel", the "communion table seven steps over the nave" and a minister who celebrated communion with his back to the congregation. By such devices the people had been "deprived of worshipping God in the plain, humble, evangelical manner."<sup>12</sup> Eventually St. Clements had to be dismantled and removed.

When a spectacular religious revival struck Ulster in 1859, it began, not in a church, but in a schoolhouse near Ballymena.<sup>13</sup> Ian Paisley's account written at the revival's 100 year "jubilee" imagines the scene when a group of young men who brought their Bibles and a handful each of peat:

... made a fire in the schoolhouse grate and warmed their bodies from the winter's chill, but their prayers brought down unquenchable fire from Heaven which set all Ulster ablaze for God, and warmed with saving rays at least 100,000 souls.<sup>14</sup>

Paisley makes a motif of the schoolhouse on his bookcover, the red rays radiating outward from the simple gabled building.<sup>15</sup> The revival is imagined for the evangelicals of the 1950s as light passing from person to person. Church buildings are irrelevant and accounts often describe the crowd outgrowing first one building, then another, eventually meeting in the open-air. Descriptions of the subsequent twentieth-century revivals associated with Bangor-born evangelist W.P. Nicholson often actually emphasized damage and destruction caused to churches by the press of people gathered.<sup>16</sup>

Whilst some mission halls with denominational links already existed, these events led to a great deal of small-scale building. Simple, nondenominational gospel halls and interdenominational mission halls sprang up all over Ulster, providing a network of spaces largely laity-led and outside of the official denominations.<sup>17</sup>

The literature on plain style takes on a critical tone as it relates to popular forms of religion. Martin Briggs, in his study of Puritan architecture is typical when he advocates the creation of central church bodies to mitigate what he views as idiosyncratic and tasteless additions attendant to autonomy: "tawdry lecterns", notice-boards in "carpenter's gothic" and even "garish stained-glass windows".<sup>18</sup> Auksi simply comments that plain style:

... came to intrigue not only Calvin and Luther but also every lesser prophet of reform who sought to express outwardly in inspired words all the turbulence and magnificence of the Spirit within.<sup>19</sup>

He implies that this led to a dissolution of the style. Auksi discusses Shaker furniture as "frozen in the time capsule of museum exhibits, ... the only fruit of a vanished tree."<sup>20</sup> Whilst Brett, who explores the implications of plainness for design and visuality, ultimately finds that plain style is now "like the salt in the sea" subsumed into modernism.<sup>21</sup> He comments that the plain style:

"aesthetic" outlasts the beliefs, loyalties and convictions in which it had its origin because it relates to the material world, and our belonging within it, which is our only home.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time Brett notes the existence of plain style as practiced in the building of meeting houses "in Northern Ireland to this day"<sup>23</sup> but consigns this to a marginal position in his argument.

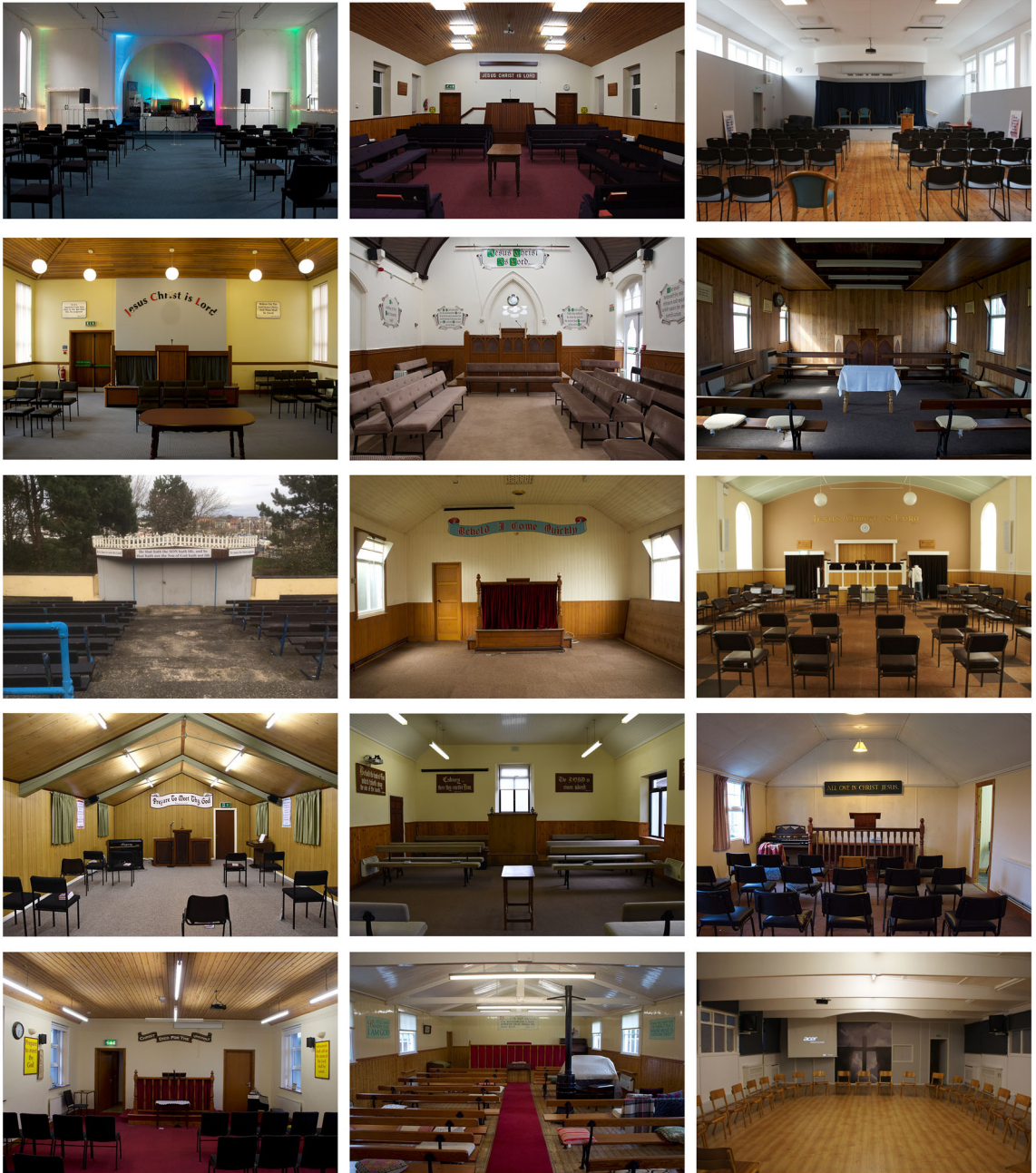
### Plainness in Ulster's Halls

As the foregoing discussion suggests, in the halls the plainness of the structure itself carries meaning. It asserts that *the church is the people* rather than a building, creating both the setting and the conditions for a popular evangelical style. The simple interiors place the people in close contact with their preachers and emphasize the importance of the Word of God. The simple building avoids creating a place that, through its sacrality, suggests a "religious duty" is performed simply by attending. It implies that evangelical work rather than buildings, should be prioritized in the allocation of funds.<sup>24</sup> Its lack of ostentation critiques the ostentation of other buildings in the religious landscape around it.<sup>25</sup> This is a plain style that is connected to the dissolution of authority, and that depends on a baseline of everyday life and everyday circumstances rather than upon ideas of formal simplicity or of perspicacity in materials. A style built out of the familiar and the quotidian (Figure 3). Yet if it is also as Henri Lefebvre might point out, an ideology that exists in space – "a space to which it refers, a space which it describes, whose vocabulary and links it makes use of, and whose code it embodies?"<sup>26</sup> Or if the immaterial is always played out through the material as Daniel Miller argues,<sup>27</sup> what forms does it take? What does a plain style like this look like? And how can it be discovered?

### Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism – Approaches to Gathering Data

George Marsden observed that outside of America, only Ulster has been so profoundly culturally influenced by Christian fundamentalism.<sup>28</sup> Today this influence is often the subject of criticism, debate and contestation, only deepened by its complex relationship with ethnosectarian division. Debates often represent Northern Ireland as unsuitably religious, contrasting its conservative politics with those of its neighbors. As Susan Harding has shown, many such criticisms, in both academic and popular interpretations of fundamentalism, implicitly propose a positivist narrative which opposes the "irrationality" of fundamentalists to the modern and the progressive.<sup>29</sup> Research questions are often asked from within these paradigms. Harding's observation that fundamentalist groups are "othered" by these narratives is important in developing a reflexive approach that avoids "falling-in" with positivist narratives that may marginalize the experience of fundamentalist Christians. Kim Knott likewise provides a tool for reflexive thinking about the issue in the form of a "field" of the religious and secular.<sup>30</sup> Knott's field is a triangle, with three poles, the secular, religious, and the post-secular. She emphasizes that there are no available positions *outside* the field, – everyone and every institution occupies a position. Knott urges that locating the researcher, as well as participants in the field, allows attention to be paid to the "personal stances we take, even when we think these are neutral."<sup>31</sup> The insights of Harding and Knott provide some guidance in the intersubjectivities that need to be negotiated in explanations and approaches to these groups. In particular, the difficulties and





**Figure 3**

A set of photographs from the photographic archive produced by selecting the keyword: "interior: main hall front". Images © the author, 2021.

opportunities inherent in making contact in order to study their material environment, and what kinds of questions are being asked about it.

The "material turn" in the humanities has not omitted iconoclastic, ascetic or unworldly Protestant groups. Theories of "objectification"<sup>32</sup> or "mediation",<sup>33</sup> which argue that all experience is

with, and through the material world, have a particular stake in proving that those who claim to be non-material, in fact, use the material world to relate to the immaterial. However, it is unavoidable that a focus on the material can amount to telling Protestants that they are wrong or misguided in their understandings of how they relate to the material world.<sup>34</sup> In this context, the examination and lasting documentation of the visible surface of material things and environments has the potential to be in tension with the ethos of evangelical groups, conflicting with an “ontological orientation towards the immaterial”<sup>35</sup> that aims to direct attention *away* from physical surroundings toward the spiritual self.<sup>36</sup> Attention paid to material aspects can, to those in the halls, appear to be missing the point. An “idoltrous emphasis of material form over spiritual meaning” perhaps,<sup>37</sup> but also simply wrong-headed and foolish.

In this context the discourse on plain style provides a way to examine the visible evidence of this ontological position. Importantly, plain style is a term that is acceptable to people in these halls as self-description. As the discussion above shows, it incorporates subtle and complex attitudes toward the expression of the immaterial through the material and it has historical weight and precedent.<sup>38</sup> The concept of a plain style then, became an important point of contact and way to explain the project during fieldwork.

Whenever possible, approaches to organize access were made through a preexisting contact rather than cold-calling. Each visit was treated as an opportunity to demonstrate that the project was sympathetic and sensitive and photographs taken were shared and discussed openly. Each visit was an opportunity to organize the next.<sup>39</sup>

### Mapping

Preparation and organization of the study required an overview of the subject. This was complicated by the heterogeneity, autonomy and independence of the halls and their congregations. Gospel halls, for instance, tend to resist any centralized authority or organization regarding each “assembly” as a group of “Christians” or “saints” rather than a particular denomination.<sup>40</sup> An overview or a complete list or documentary source from which research could proceed simply did not exist. In addressing these concerns and providing criteria to inform qualitative sampling approaches for the visual methods, an ongoing inventory of the halls has been compiled with the aim to map the buildings in time and space. Geo-references and dates were drawn from a wide variety of sources. These were confirmed by the examination of Google Earth satellite images, Street View images and by field work, resulting in a list of approximately 750 halls across the nine counties of Ulster.<sup>41</sup> The data collected at this stage suggests that the buildings date largely to the 20th Century, peaking in the 1930s, with just a few extant halls as early as the 1880s and a few built since the year 2000. The pattern of spatial dispersion appears to support Neil Southern’s

comments in which he identifies a restriction of evangelical “territory” associated with the region’s history of conflict.<sup>42</sup> For example, the murders that took place at Mountain Lodge Evangelical Church, in Darkley in 1983, when three worshippers were killed and seven injured.

Ongoing photographic documentation is intended to include halls across urban, suburban, small town, and rural contexts; a representative geographic distribution; and a variety of build dates.

### **Photography and the Vernacular**

Well established guidelines exist for the photographic documentation of buildings.<sup>43</sup> These can be supplemented by publications aimed specifically at recording similar small chapels and meeting houses.<sup>44</sup> The methods described in such guidelines tend to suggest a set of images including clear photographs of primary facade, exterior context, interior, and notable details. They aim at comparability so that researchers working over different disciplines, building types and geographic areas may provide information useful to a range of future investigations or for compilation into gazetteers and surveys. The photographic method employed here benefits from their advice but incorporates reflective practices aimed at ensuring the inquiry looks with care at the quotidian aspects of the halls (Figure 4).

The project can be described as being in search of a kind of plain style vernacular, with vernacular understood to describe an orientation, a “point of view”,<sup>45</sup> in which the object is studied from the ground up. The ascription of the word “vernacular” preparing a building type for study, as Henry Glassie has put it – welcoming the neglected.<sup>46</sup> Under these circumstances, photography allows for the transformation from a “local or place-specific form” into a form that can be disseminated.<sup>47</sup> The photographic study of the “unregarded” is a practice that has important predecessors going back as far as Eugène Atget with his determination to record a disappearing Paris or to R.M. Richards and Eric Le Mare’s work defining a “functional tradition” in the architecture of the industrial revolution.<sup>48</sup> The traditions examined by these types of photographic projects are largely anonymous, vernacular rather than formalized and arguments are built up through the accumulation of visual evidence. In the Northern Irish context Marcus Patton has demonstrated the technique in a long-term study of the everyday architectural features of Ulster buildings.<sup>49</sup> Patton’s examination of bargeboards, dormer windows, doors, porches, and so on shows how topologizing these features can defamiliarize them. He draws parallels with natural history, likening the architectural features he studies to “small and dun-coloured birdlife”<sup>50</sup> and his method to the Linnean classification system associated with the natural sciences.<sup>51</sup> By recontextualising individual architectural features in association with one another in sequences, he shows how such features answer (or cause) practical as well as stylistic problems. Using a collection of photographs, Patton carefully develops a visual exploration

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**Figure 4**

A set of photographs from the photographic archive produced by selecting the keyword: “object: freewill box”. Images © the author, 2021.

of the character of ordinary Ulster architecture. Also in Ulster, photographer Gordon Ashbridge has produced a series of images of gospel hall interiors that encourage comparative examination and consideration.<sup>52</sup> These types of studies depend upon meticulous observation, upon the acts of noticing and recording and of developing a sense for making the familiar the *known*.<sup>53</sup>

Remarks from foundational figures in the analysis of photography such as John Berger have problematized photography’s status as a medium of “direct access to the real.”<sup>54</sup> As Gillian Rose argues, the research question can link the photographic decisions to the topic and provide the basis for reflexive discussion, transparency, and analysis. Here the question of what a plain style might look like in the halls formed the basis for investigation, evolving into a “shooting script”<sup>55</sup> in tandem with the reflection enabled by ongoing analysis.

As Berger points out, a photograph is taken from a context that is “continuous with that from which the camera removed it”.<sup>56</sup> He argues that it is necessary to “construct a context for the photographs, to construct it with words, to construct it with other photographs.”<sup>57</sup> The point made is that photographs are unlikely to be “self-explanatory” but

through contextualization can become “components of an argument.”<sup>58</sup> In the case of this project, the argument is developed through a combination of image and text as the basis of a careful, inductive inquiry built up through “the acquisition and analysis of visual data”.<sup>59</sup> The visual data collected is organized, reorganized, and reflected upon as visual evidence relating to the research question. A vital component of this approach is the use of digital metadata.

### **Digital Asset Management**

A DAM (Digital Asset Management) system is used in the research as a method of controlling and managing data. Text is added to photographs in the form of metadata that is stored as part of the image file. This relies on the development and application of sets of hierarchized “keywords” to images. For instance, “text”, “interior”, “threshold”, object: coat-hooks In the project keywords have been used to label the content of photographs but they may also be “concept based”,<sup>60</sup> allowing for different levels of analysis. An example is “text: appropriation”, which refers to instances when text has been added to objects or images, in order to reframe their meaning. The keywords provide a controlled vocabulary, ensuring consistency and allowing queries to be built up by cross-referencing. The system can for instance, retrieve all images of exterior texts made of plastic, by selecting the keywords “exterior”, “text”, “material: plastic”. The collection of images becomes analogous to an extended photographic typology. Descriptions are also added and can become part of search queries or simply points to note that cannot be covered by the keywording system. For instance, descriptions are used to input text in each image so that instances of the same bible passage can be viewed together across different contexts and material forms and recurring passages or combinations identified (Figure 5).

The collection and the keywording of the images are not discrete stages in the research; the approach to photography is iterative. The process of keywording each set of images provides an opportunity to consider which images *could* or *should* have been taken, what has been missed out and what is being obscured by the photographic decisions made. Each set of images can be compared with the previous, in order to keep the shooting script under review. Reflective questions can then be asked such as “what is this set of images revealing and what is it obscuring?” These reflections inform the shooting script for the next set of images. In turn the emerging keywords are reformulated.

### **Findings**

The heterogeneity in the exterior forms of the halls (Figure 2) suggests many differing responses to context.<sup>61</sup> A “Noah’s ark” form,<sup>62</sup> composed of a rectangular hall with a pitched roof, a porch on the front gable and a lean-to on the rear appears as a frequent solution to the set of problems encountered by groups. Recurring symmetry in the facades is one method



**Figure 5**

A set of photographs from the photographic archive produced by searching the metadata descriptions field for: “Christ died for the ungodly”. Images © the author, 2021.

of differentiating the halls from other buildings and organizing them visually. Symmetry recurs as an organizational principle too in the interiors, connecting interior to exterior and leading up to, and emphasising, the platform and pulpit as a central hearth-like space where the gospel can be heard. Porches and entranceways accumulate text, and are sites of change, they display finishes and building techniques that are sometimes very different from the rest of the hall. Even as texts and invitations direct attention to the entrance, suggesting that these are place to walk *into*, rather than *out of*,<sup>63</sup> security screens, barriers and roller shutters complicate the message.

Text is the primary means and site of decoration. Halls make innovative use of sight lines to increase visibility and create textual relationships in space and time as the halls are experienced by passersby, congregants and even speakers. Rather than merely functioning as aids to memory,<sup>64</sup> texts emphasize central evangelical concerns such as the urgency of salvation. A canon can be discerned. New Testament verses recur such as: Amos 4:12 “Prepare to face thy God”; Philippians 2:11 “Jesus Christ is Lord,” Romans 5:6 “Christ died for the Ungodly” (Authorised Version) all presenting a plain and unambiguous



**Figure 6**  
 A set of photographs from the photographic archive produced by selecting keywords: “text: gothic”. Images © the author, 2021.

message. Using text, the interior of the hall diverts wandering glances into endless opportunities for internalizing the Word of God (Figure 6).

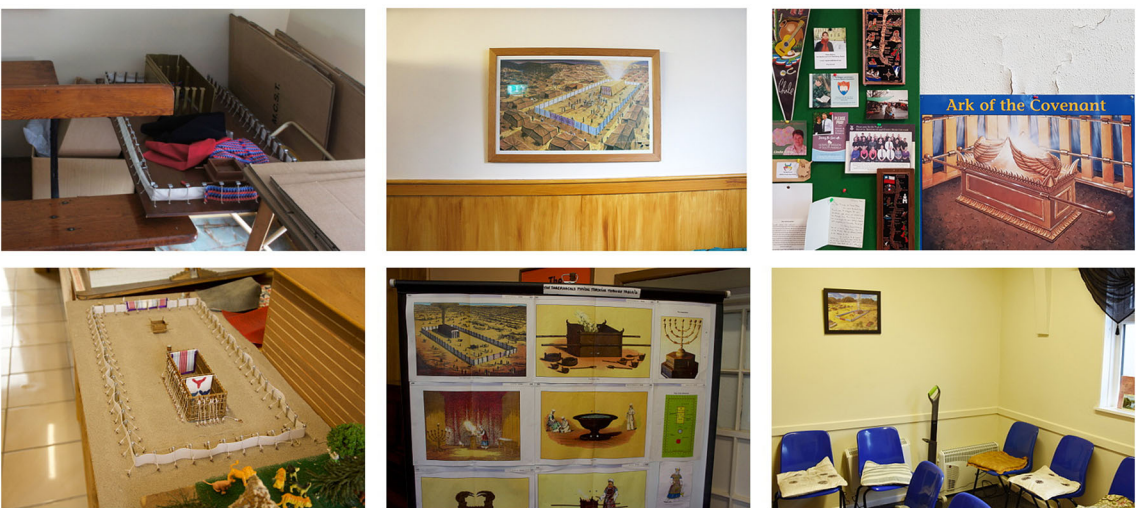
Simon Coleman has suggested that the biblical text used in this way is a “performative statement”<sup>65</sup> in which the “symbolic, ambiguous character of language is played down,”<sup>66</sup> suggesting that socialization provides access to a tradition which bounds and naturalizes understandings of the Bible. Yet if language is ambiguous, buildings are more so, and the Noah’s ark form of the halls rarely fully differentiates them from commercial premises, garages or shops. If the meaning of a building is “superabundant”<sup>67</sup> or even just unclear, text can be used to make it more plain.

Written texts are regarded by these evangelicals as having a very real potential for life-changing conversion.<sup>68</sup> These dynamics play out in

the materiality of the text itself. Words are “printed, written, chiseled, carved, painted, as well as sung, spoken, digitally recorded, dramatized, echoed.”<sup>69</sup> Words in the halls are marked by elaboration and gold finishes that are not present in other parts of the buildings. Variations of the black-letter or gothic typeface, as well as scroll and shield forms, provide an arena for exploration of the word-as-image, the intrinsic flexibility of these letter-forms lending itself to hand-making and visual exploration. In later examples these give way to modern sans-serif typefaces, reproduced by machine rather than by hand. Such types may be said to present the written word as transparent,<sup>70</sup> here the material often emphasizes their physicality, they are often set out from the wall, finished in brushed aluminum or polished acrylic.

Images are unusual, and are always linked to biblical text. If creative exploration of material and image may be legitimized by a biblical foundation, representations of the “Tabernacle in the Wilderness” are one of the most striking examples. Described in the book of Exodus, the form, construction and material of the tabernacle and associated objects such as the “Table of Shewbread” and the “Ark of the Covenant” are described in minute detail and symbolic meanings drawn from their materials, but they are also drawn and modeled and images of them circulated (Figure 7).

In “typological” understandings of the Old Testament the tabernacle as a dwelling for God is the “type” that relates directly to the “anti-type” of the current age in which God dwells in the individual believer. The tabernacle therefore, presents a complex relationship in which material and immaterial are linked in time. Poetically the tabernacle *in the wilderness* is rich in dialectics and trajectories of inside and outside,<sup>71</sup> transforming outside to wilderness.



**Figure 7**

A set of photographs from the photographic archive produced by selecting keywords: “object: tabernacle”. Images © the author, 2021.





**Figure 8**

A set of photographs from the photographic archive produced by selecting keywords matching either: “material: graining” or “material: beauty-board”. Images © the author, 2021.

Many interiors are constructed from “beauty-board”, which allows the walls to be economically covered over, making the space neat, clean and better insulated. Beauty board is sometimes used to a degree that is visually striking (Figure 8). In halls that have been taken over by more “progressive” groups this is usually covered over again, painted white or grey. The visual characteristics of bare wood are a recurring feature and in older or less altered halls the craft of “graining” could be considered analogous.

These transitions between, and hybrids of hand-made and the mass-produced are reflected in many other materials and technologies such as corrugated iron, uPVC or the use of sectional timber buildings.

The study of plain style in this everyday context involves facing the risk that the “style” melts away. At what point is the plain style the

avoidance of style? Close to utility, to function and limited by real constraints, plain style threatens always to be merely the varied responses to limited resources and local conditions. This study embraces the idea of a plain style that is made through the everyday and always at risk of dissolving into it.

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**Kevin Miller** is currently a PhD candidate at the Belfast school of Art and design in Ulster University. His research interests are on the material culture of religion, everyday design, and visual methodologies. His PhD research concerns evangelical meeting halls in Ulster, using visual methodologies to explore and define a 'plain style' approach to materiality.

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**Ian Montgomery** is Professor of Design and Director of Sustainability at Ulster University in Belfast, UK. He was previously Pro Vice Chancellor for Global Engagement, Faculty Dean of Art Design and the Built Environment, Head of Belfast School of Art, and the first Research Director for Art and Design. He holds a BA and PhD in Design and has acted as external examiner, chief external examiner, and chaired institutional reviews in the UK, Ireland, Europe, and the Far East. Ian continues to publish on art, design, and built environment and has successfully supervised PhD projects in photography, design, typography, creative industries, architecture/planning, creative technologies, and media.

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**Catherine O'Hara** is a lecturer in Design History and Post Graduate Tutor at the Belfast School of Art, Ulster University. Her research interests include the role and status of design, material culture, women's design history, design for industry in Northern Ireland, with particular interest in the Ulster textile industry.

### **Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to acknowledge the many individuals who have allowed their halls to be visited and photographed and who have helped with organising visits and providing contacts within these evangelical communities. The visual methods have been informed by helpful conversations with Gordon Ashbridge and Judith Cole. Dr. Alan Wilson provided early insight into the gospel hall tradition. The authors would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers, the paper benefited greatly from their suggestions.

### **Funding**

This work was supported by the Department for the Economy (DfE) of Northern Ireland.

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## Notes

1. C.f. Anthony D. Buckley and Mary Catherine Kenney, *Negotiating Identity : Rhetoric, Metaphor, and Social Drama in Northern Ireland* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995). Andrew Holmes, "The Experience and Understanding of Religious Revival in Ulster Presbyterianism, c. 1800–1930," *Irish Historical Studies* 34, no. 136 (2005): 361–385.
2. Harold Turner, *From Temple to Meeting House: The Phenomenology and Theology of Places of Worship* (The Hague: Moulton Publishers, 1979).
3. *Ibid.*, 11.
4. *Ibid.*, 123.
5. Jean Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space* (Oxford: University Press, 2008), 92.
6. Richard Oram, *Expressions of Faith: Ulster's Church Heritage* (Newtownards: Colorpoint, 2001), 9.
7. Anthony Garvan, "The Protestant Plain Style before 1630," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 9, no. 3 (October 1950): 6.
8. Peter Auksi, *Christian Plain Style : The Evolution of a Christian Ideal* (Montréal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1995), 7.
9. David Brett, *The Plain Style: The Reformation, Culture and the crisis in Protestant Identity The Plain Style* (Belfast: Black Square Books, 1999), 32.
10. *Ibid.*, 75.
11. Sean Farrell, "Building Opposition: The Mant Controversy and the Church of Ireland in Early Victorian Belfast," *Irish Historical Studies* 39, no. 154 (November 2014): 230–249.
12. "Alleged Ritualism at St. Clement's Church", *Belfast Newsletter*, (Oct. 8th, 1898), 7.
13. For an account, see: William Gibson, *The Year of Grace: A History of the Ulster Revival of 1859* (Belfast: Ambassador Books, 1989)
14. Quoted in Stanley Barnes, *A Pictorial History of the 1859 Revival and Related Awakenings in Ulster* (Belfast: Ambassador Books, 2008), 43.
15. Although he has been quoted here to illustrate how narratives of the 1859 revival provide a touchstone for evangelicals in Ulster, many of the evangelical groups under discussion would be strongly critical of Ian Paisley's combination of religion and politics. Both differences and similarities can be illustrated by reference to Paisley's brother Harold. Harold Paisley was also a well-known evangelical preacher but was committed to a gospel hall tradition which rejects involvement in politics.
16. For an example: "Through Rifle Fire to Mission", *Belfast Telegraph*, (April 22nd, 1958), 9.
17. Andrew Holmes, "The Experience and Understanding of Religious Revival in Ulster Presbyterianism, c. 1800–1930", *Irish Historical Studies* 34, no. 136 (2005): 375–376.
18. Martin Briggs, *Puritan Architecture and its Future* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1964), 75.
19. Auksi, *Christian Plain Style*, 305.
20. *Ibid.*, 310.
21. Brett, *The Plain Style*, 14.
22. *Ibid.*, 8.
23. *Ibid.*, 74.
24. Neil Dickson, "Brethren and Their Buildings," *The Chapels Society Journal* 3 (2018): 27.
25. Simon Coleman and Peter Collins, "The 'Plain' and the 'Positive': Ritual, Experience and Aesthetics in Quakerism and Charismatic Christianity," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 15, no. 3 (2000): 321.
26. Henri Lefebvre and Donald Nicholson-Smith, *The Production of Space* (Malden, MA: Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 44.
27. Daniel Miller, *Materiality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).
28. George Marsden, "Fundamentalism as an American Phenomenon, A Comparison with English Evangelicalism," *Church History* 46, no. 2 (1977): 216. Also noted by Crawford Gribben and Andrew R. Holmes,

- Protestant Millennialism, Evangelicalism, and Irish Society, 1790–2005* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 232.
29. Susan Harding, "Representing Fundamentalism: The Problem of the Repugnant Cultural Other," *Social Research* 58, no. 2 (1991): 373–393.
  30. Kim Knott, *The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 2014).
  31. *Ibid.*, 126.
  32. Miller, *Materiality*.
  33. Cf. James S. Bielo, *Anthropology of Religion: The Basics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015); Birgit Meyer et al., "The Origin and Mission of Material Religion," *Religion* 40, no. 3 (2010): 207–211; David Morgan, "Mediation or Mediatization: The History of Media in the Study of Religion," *Culture and Religion* 12, no. 2 (2011): 137–152.
  34. Ingie Hovland, "Beyond Mediation: An Anthropological Understanding of the Relationship Between Humans, Materiality, and Transcendence in Protestant Christianity," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 86, no. 2 (2018): 425–453.
  35. Joseph Webster, *The Anthropology of Protestantism Faith and Crisis among Scottish Fishermen* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 105.
  36. Simon Coleman, "Words as Things: Language, Aesthetics and the Objectification of Protestant Evangelicalism," *Journal of Material Culture* 1, no. 1 (1996b): 107.
  37. Simon Coleman, "All-Consuming Faith: Language, Material Culture and World-Transformation among Protestant Evangelicals," *Etnofoor* 9, no. 1 (1996a): 107.
  38. See Peter Collins, "Quaker Plaining as Critical Aesthetic," *Quaker Studies* 5, no. 2 (2000): 121–39.
  39. Fieldwork was carried out between May and December 2021.
  40. Tim Grass, *Brethren and Their Buildings* (Glasgow: Brethren Archivists and Historians Network, 2021): 21.
  41. The inventory includes both existing halls and those no longer extant and includes previous iterations of many halls, approximately 400 of these halls are extant.
  42. Neil Southern, "Strong Religion and Political Viewpoints in a Deeply Divided Society: An Examination of the Gospel Hall Tradition in Northern Ireland," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 26, no. 3 (2011): 436.
  43. Terry Buchanan, *Photographing Historic Buildings for the Record* 1983; HeroNI, "Photographing Historic Buildings – Notes for Surveyors | Department for Communities," 2017, <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/photographing-historic-buildings-notes-surveyors> (accessed June 15, 2021).
  44. H. Godwin Arnold et al., *Hallelujah!: Recording Chapels and Meeting Houses* (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1985).
  45. Peter Guillery, "Vernacular Studies and British Architectural History," in *Built from Below: British Architecture and the Vernacular* (London: Routledge: 2010), 1.
  46. Henry Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press: 2010), 20.
  47. Mike Christenson, Viewpoint: "From the Unknown to the Known: Transitions in the Architectural Vernacular," *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 2.
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  50. *Ibid.*, 9.
  51. *Ibid.*, 44.
  52. Gordon Ashbridge, *For God and Ulster*, Dublin: Gallery of Photography Ireland, 2014.
  53. Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life* (London: New York: Verso, 1995), 132.
  54. John Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), 48.
  55. Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials* (London: Sage, 2012), 312.
  56. Berger, *Understanding a Photograph*, 52.
  57. *Ibid.* 60.
  58. Carole Gray and Julian Malins, *Visualizing Research a Guide to the*

- Research Process in Art and Design* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 95.
59. Gray and Malins, *Visualising Research*, 108.
  60. Margot Note, *Managing Image Collections* (Oxford: Chandos Publishing, 2011), 125.
  61. Philip D. Zimmerman, "Workmanship as Evidence: A Model for Object Study," *Winterthur Portfolio* 16, no. 4 (1981): 283–307.
  62. Dickson, "Brethren and Their Buildings," 28.
  63. Georg Simmel, "Bridge and Door," *Theory, Culture & Society* 11, no. 1 (February 1994): 5–10.
  64. C.f. John Harvey, "Seen to Be Remembered: Presentation, Representation and Recollection in British Evangelical Culture since the Late 1970s," *Journal of Design History* 17, no. 2 (2004): 177–192.
  65. Simon Coleman, "Words as Things: Language," 108.
  66. *Ibid.*, 111.
  67. Lindsay Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison, Volume 1: Monumental Occasions: Reflections on the Eventfulness of Religious Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).
  68. Joseph Webster, "Objects of Transcendence: Scots Protestantism and an Anthropology of Things," in *Material Religion in Modern Britain The Spirit of Things*, ed. Timothy Willem Jones and Lucinda Matthews-Jones (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 26.
  69. S. Brent Plate, "Words," *Material Religion* 7, no. 1 (2011): 157.
  70. *Ibid.*, 158.
  71. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (New York: Penguin 2014).

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