The programme for the building was explicit. There was to be a church to which the public could come at an occasion decided. There were to be a hundred cells for professors and students, an enclos, a dining room, a library, a classroom, and spaces for conference and recreation. Finances were meagre. There was a problem of institutional decorum. But though the architect was further subjected to certain very definite limitations, and though he was involved with a religious order whose regime was established rather more than seven centuries ago, it cannot truthfully be claimed that the operational requirements with which he was confronted were not rigid and inflexible as to predicate any sequent solution.

It is possible to imagine the Wrightian version of this programme: a major hexagonal volume, predating by an inward impulse a variety of minor hexagonals, terraces and covered ways. A Meccano solution can be envisioned. E. Hassey of the Architectural Review, the Kahnian and a whole forest of other variants sworn in the imagination. But the number of choices available to any one man, like those available to any one epoch, is never so great as those which, in fact, exist. Like the epoch, the man has his style—the sum total of the emotional dispositions, the mental bias and the characteristic acts which, taken together, compose his existence, and in its essential distributives (though with one great exception), Le Corbusier's building is co-ordinated very much along the lines that previous evidence of his style would lead one to predict.

The solution which he has presented—a quadrilateral pierced by a court yard, with the church on the north side, with the cells deployed to east, south and west in two tiers immediately below the roof; with the library, classrooms, storey and principal entrance on the floor below this; with the refectory, chapter house and major circulations at the still lower level adjacent to the floor of the church; and, below this again, the kitchen—is evidently from the published plans of the building taken, and, like all Le Corbusier’s solutions, it is both a highly generalized as well as a highly particularized statement.

It would be said that La Tourette, like any other building by any other architect, is primarily determined by a formal programme which is felt to be a logical one. Obviously it reflects Le Corbusier’s insistance on volumetric economy; and it was reasonable, therefore, to suggest that the final premise of the argument on which it is based are not really susceptible to empirical proof. Secondly, theomastery would seem to be determined on the basis of category, i.e., by its relation to a series of propositions which postulate the ideal form of a Dominican establishment, conceived in the abstract, and presumed to be valid irrespective of circumstances of place or time. And finally, these more or less a prioristic conclusions are brought into architectural connection with specific conditions of beauty.

The site was allegedly of Le Corbusier’s own choosing. It could be supposed that other architects might have chosen otherwise. But, if a superb prospect verified the selection, it does also seem probable that this particular terrain was chosen for its inherent difficulties. For at La Tourette the site is everything and nothing. It is equipped with an abrupt slope and a barely accidental convex fall. It is by no means the local condition which would readily justify that quintessential Dominican establishment which seems to have been preconceived. Rather it is the reverse: architecture and landscape, hard and separate experiences, are like the rival protagonists of a debate who progressively contrast and clarify each other’s meaning.

Above all, the nature of their interaction is dialectical, and thus the building, with its church to the north, liturgically correct in orientation, separated from but adjoining the living quarters which face the sun, it presented as though it were a thesis for discussion; and thus the site inevitably rises to function as counter-proposition. There is a statement of presumed universal and a contrary statement of particular. There is the real proclamation and the non-factual experience, the literal gesture, the empirical casting. But, if this is a procedure with which Le Corbusier has long since made us familiar, and such is the particular mode of legge, there is, of course, here in the programme a curious pragmatic justification for its specific. For even, after all, a Dominican monastery which was here required. An architectural dialectician, the greatest, was in the service of the requirements of the arch-sophisticals of dialectic and there was, therefore, a quite special dimension of appropriateness which inhered in the approach.

But, if the building thus answers to the ethos of the institution, this was the more evident of parallel activities, of equivalent rigour. The architect scarcely set out deliberately to provide a plastic analogue of scholastic dialect; it was not that his state of mind and that of his clients were co-incident in their stringent question, or that both parties were rationally aware of their own identity and difference. Above all, it was not a case of the architect mimicking an architectural reason so much as it was the presence of both sides of irreproachable intellectual integrity which has disconcerted the logical conclusions of the argument of all those consolatory flourishes which are apt to be the outcome of attempts to bring religious institutions and modern architecture into accord. At La Tourette there are no turgid atmospheres. There is nothing ingratulating or cheaply and, as a result, the building becomes positive in its rejection of compromise. It is not so much a church with living quarters attached, as it is a domestic theatre for viri of asceticism, with, adjoining it, a gymnasium for the reception of spiritual athletes. The figure of the boxer and his punch ball on the terrace of the 1938 project for Geneva has been crossed out with the image of Jacob wrestling with the Angel.

However, this is to discuss effects before causes. The play on spiritual values and physical gymnastics may be one of the more endearing themes at La Tourette but it is a result rather than a determinant, and the immediate occasion of the building, apart from the dialectic of architecture and site, ought now at least briefly to be noticed. While, since Le Corbusier has always been frugal with ideas and never mistaken more experiments in intellectual profligacy for thoughtfulness, the more obvious occasion is not far to seek.

There is the famous structural schema for the Maison Lambone, with its concep-