ABSTRACT

CHRISTIAN CHURCH ARCHITECTURE ACROSS THE UNITED STATES:

HOW THE RHETORIC OF THE BUILDING AND ITS APPOINTMENTS

SPEAK TO THE DOCTRINE AND PRACTICES OF A CHURCH

By

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While the study of visual rhetoric has burgeoned in the last half century, architecture as a subset of that field has received minimal attention. Yet the visual rhetoric of architecture has great potential to communicate, whether by creating a mood, promoting a message, persuading an audience, or teaching a lesson. This thesis demonstrates how architecture is part of the growing body of visual rhetoric, contributing two unique genres of architecture to the field of study, specifically Christian church architecture: the traditional church and the megachurch. Utilizing ideological criticism and Longinus' perspective on transcendence provided insight into each genre's link to the spiritual, which subsequently established grounds to conclude that the architecture of traditional churches reinforces a Christ-centered Biblical approach, while the architecture of the megachurches promotes anthropocentrism. Ultimately, this thesis demonstrates architecture's ability to stimulate, persuade, and educate an audience and encourages further research into this form of visual rhetoric.

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The church's one Foundation Is Jesus Christ her Lord;

She is His new creation By water and the Word.

From heaven He came and sought her To be His holy bride;

With His own blood He bought her, And for her life He died.

Elect from every nation, Yet one o´er all the earth;

Her charter of salvation: One Lord, one faith, one birth.

One holy Name she blesses, Partakes one holy food.

And to one hope she presses, With every grace endued.

Though with a scornful wonder The world sees her oppressed,

By schisms rent asunder, By heresies distressed,

Yet saints their watch are keeping; Their cry goes up, "How long?"

And soon the night of weeping Shall be the morn of song.

Through toil and tribulation And tumult of her war,

She waits the consummation Of peace for evermore;

Till with the vision glorious Her longing eyes are blest,

And the great church victorious Shall be the church at rest.

Yet she on earth hath union With God, the Three in One,

And mystic sweet communion With those whose rest is won:

O blessèd heav´nly chorus! Lord, save us by Your grace,

That we, like saints before us, May see You face to face.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The one foundation for the holy Christian and apostolic church is first and

foremost Jesus Christ. For it is written, the church is "built on the foundation of the

apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. In Him the

whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord"

(Concordia Self-Study Bible, Eph. 2.20-21). However, what is built and developed upon

that foundation seems to differ from church to church, sometimes inconsequentially,

sometimes radically—both inside and out. Churches under the same expansive Christian

umbrella vary in their church doctrine and practices as much as they vary in their

architectural design and liturgical appointments. Is there then a relationship between

belief and architecture? Do the internal differences influence the external differences?

Does form follow function?

Right or wrong, good or bad, opinions and/or judgments are regularly based on

the nonverbal—simply put, people *do* tend to "judge a book by its cover" and more often

than not with good reason. Many branches of science rely heavily on this kind of

observation, as "simple observation of the known world is the most fundamental act of

scientific discovery" (Ragsdale 7). For example, archaeologists use artifacts and

dwellings to decipher people's past; ethnographers use the context of people's lives, such

as habitat, employment, and customs, to understand a particular society; and

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psychologists use facial expression and body movement to discern people's attitude or state of mind. Yet this reliance on the nonverbal is not limited to the sciences; it is a phenomenon that influences the world over. In fact, researchers have indicated that up to 65 percent of all meaning is derived from nonverbal cues (Engleberg 151). Advertisers exploit this fact by employing visual rhetoric in their use of pictures as a symbol system to persuade a targeted demographic (Tom and Eves 39). "Television commercials have got it down to an art. Quick cuts minimize the visual information and allow minidramas, mini-love stories, and miniplots to unfold" (Friedmann 92). Restaurants capitalize on the knowledge that food presentation helps make food more enticing. Job placement agencies counsel their clients on nonverbal pointers to facilitate successful interviews, advising on things such as apparel, hygiene, and eye contact. Real estate agents know the secret to selling a house is home staging, because paint color, furniture placement, and other home accents all play a part in what is being communicated to the buyer. Even the technological world lays claim to visual rhetoric; for example, "a home page is a communication device" (Hlynka). Furthermore, the Supreme Court has recognized the significance of nonverbal communication by protecting "symbolic speech" under the First Amendment, as evidenced in landmark cases such as *Tinker v. Des Moines* in 1969. Clearly, nonverbal communication[1] extends past body language, facial expression, and eye contact and includes clothing, symbols, decoration, and more—anything that can create a wordless message.

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[1] For the purposes of this thesis, references to "nonverbal communication" encompass all things capable of being visually persuasive or relaying a message.

2

Visual rhetoric in fact has an extensive history, with "ongoing and sustained attention to visuality going back to ancient conceptions of rhetoric" (Olson, Finnegan, and Hope xvi). From Aristotle's belief that humankind used "phantasmata," or mental images, for memory and motivation, to Longinus' attention to "image" for vividly bringing to life that which is described, to the medieval church with its icons, vestments, and architecture evidencing the power within the church, to today's bombardment of visual advertising on billboards, posters, and flyers persuading audiences of every walk of life, "ocularcentrism" has abounded. Much of the focus of visual rhetorical studies has been on public performances and visual technologies of modern politics; yet the field has well established the overall importance of considering the rhetorical impact of what is seen (Gronbeck xxi). Indeed, "the visual is vital to communicating in public life"; it is a language unto itself, one that has the power to transcend normal language barriers (Olson, Finnegan, and Hope xvi).

In light of the aforementioned "power" that the visual yields, this thesis will endeavor to further the burgeoning research in visual rhetoric, specifically that of Christian church architecture across the United States. Accordingly, this preliminary chapter will establish the rhetorical nature of architecture in general and church architecture in particular. A brief history of church architecture also will be provided to help contextualize the current critique. After the significance of critiquing church architecture is demonstrated, the methods employed in this analysis will be summarized. Lastly, the criteria established for selecting churches to include will be provided, along with a general orientation of the subsequent chapters.

Architecture's Rhetorical Nature

Architecture is a communication medium, as it "is a form of language. . . . It speaks. It can convey through its design, its place in society, its content" (O'Gorman 89). Likewise, design "is rhetorical as it emphasizes certain qualities more than others . . . [and] implies a selection of values. . . . Architecture, too, when it is good, is precise and distinct, pregnant and rich in experience and meanings" (Tostrup 11). Buildings communicate these qualities, values, and meanings in a variety of ways, inside and out, through scale, lighting, materials, color, furnishings, and the like. They evoke a response from people, whether consciously or unconsciously: a feeling of tranquility and welcome upon entering a home, an awareness of cleanliness and order at a doctor's office, an impression of vastness and expectation at sports arenas and auditoriums (White, *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture* 27). Without a word uttered, an individual can discern much about the purpose, function, success, and status of a place from its design. Without a word spoken, a simple structure can instill a feeling, a mood, a response.

Predominantly, these reactions are the precise goal of those commissioning a building's construction. A bank's design strives to communicate trustworthiness, security, and dependability—like William Strickland's Doric design for the second Bank of the United States. In the early part of the nineteenth century, Strickland was commissioned by Nicholas Biddle, first head of the National Bank, who insisted on using Greek architecture in all bank branches. Biddle believed that "like patriotic songs and epics of exploration, the timeless grandeur of Greek design could awaken in Americans a visceral sense of national unity" (Sklanksy). Similarly, the design of a university

endeavors to communicate tradition, diversity, and refinement. The design of a business

firm desires to communicate experience, reliability, and success. "To achieve these

impressions emotive factors have been carefully analyzed. Indeed, . . . [creating] image

has become a highly specialized occupation" (White, *Protestant Worship and Church

Architecture* 27). For while it may not be possible to predict the precise effect

architecture will have on a society, it is possible to "have a reasonably clear idea of the

consequences that a given design will have for different stakeholders, society at large and

nature et cetera" (Holm 55).

A notable example of architecture communicating to the public is the

commemorative monument, especially as Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci declared them to be

"rhetorical products of some significance" (263). Such monuments are typically

epideictic in nature, effectively doing the rhetorical work of a eulogy.

> They mark death, declare particular relationships between the
>
> commemorated and the living, offer a space in which a community may
>
> gather to acknowledge its loss and reaffirm its sense of collectivity, and
>
> suggest or even advocate a future for the community that is somehow
>
> linked to the lives or events commemorated. (Campbell and Jamieson 20)

Memorials of this nature speak to their audiences through design devices to evidence

their purpose and to evoke a particular response. For example, the Astronauts Memorial

at Kennedy Space Center, Florida, states its purpose in features like the massive upward-

tilted mirror reflecting the sky and drawing spectators' gaze spaceward, as well as the

skyward projected names of those lost in the exploration of space. Additionally, many of

its features are designed to stir emotions fitting to the solemnity of the tribute: its

massive height calling attention to "its message of memory"; the elevated positioning of the commemorated astronauts' names granting them a special status; the dramatic color change on the approach to the wall setting the honorees apart in a noble realm (Blair and Michel 34).

Another such example is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. With its simple black V-shaped wall, flagpole, and, later added, three-soldier statue, this memorial has been acclaimed as "the most visited site on the Washington Mall" and has been declared to have "taken on all of the trappings of a religious shrine" (Sturken 133). This latter feature of "sight sacralization" is the process "in which attributes formerly reserved for holy places are ascribed to tourist attractions" and says much about the significance of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (Haines 3). So why does this particular memorial possess such popularity and power?

The Vietnam Wall has a unique rhetorical nature able to "appeal to audiences of diverse and often opposing perspectives" (Foss, "Ambiguity as Persuasion" 328). In an in-depth study on the rhetoric of the Vietnam Memorial, Foss attributed its universal appeal to the fact that

> (a) It violates the conventional form of war memorials; (b) It assumes a welcoming stance; (c) It provides little information to the visitor; (d) It focuses attention on those who did not survive the war; and (e) It generates multiple referents for its visual components. (331)

The Wall does not have the typical war figures or scenes that most memorials utilize to represent all those who fought and died in service of country; rather it has a simple, concrete list of names to personalize those lives lost. Moreover, the Wall does not have

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the characteristic patriotic buildup present in most memorials; instead, it has somber, contemplative qualities. By its "embracing" V-shaped design, the Wall invites spectators to come near, touch, explore. By its lack of war details, the Wall neither celebrates nor condemns, neither promotes nor protests. Indeed, the Wall is more a memorial to the lost than to the war, as it focuses on those who died. Its shape, color, and position are all referents that can speak to a diverse audience, no single element asserting one meaning over another. Combined, all of these design devices grant the Vietnam Wall a unique rhetorical influence, one that "appeal(s) to individuals who approach it from very different perspectives" (337).

To date, the majority of research studying architecture as visual rhetoric revolves around public commemorative monuments; however, other genres of architecture have begun to be explored. For example, Ragsdale, Blair and Patin looked at museums, specifically their appeal to the masses and their influence upon the art that they exhibit.

> Museums do not merely display objects, but present them in a certain
> order and context. . . . Further, museums, like the arts of memory,
> articulate the qualities and the relationships of things, thus forming a
> discourse on the world and on the sensual experience of the world.
> (Patin 131)
>
> Museums and their collections may be explicit or implicit means of
> persuasion. By virtue of the choices made to exhibit certain pieces and not
> others or to display some more prominently than others, museums make
> statements about essential cultural beliefs, political points of view, and the
> like. (Ragsdale 6)

Clearly buildings do communicate. Even the current controversial debate over whether

or not a Muslim community center is suitable for construction near New York's 9/11

Ground Zero is fundamentally a matter of what rhetoric will be propagated: religious

tolerance or insensitivity to a grieving community (Hernandez). Arguments from

advocates of the center insist that the Cordoba House will broadcast America's

commitment to religious freedom and "bridge-building" for Muslim-West relations. Yet

opponents of the initiative maintain that the center "will not be seen as a center for peace

and reconciliation. It will rather be celebrated as a Muslim monument erected on the site

of a great Muslim 'military' victory—a milestone on the path to the further spread of

Islam throughout the world" (Senor A17). Accordingly, this particular architectural

project has the rhetorical broadness to encompass very different messages, very different

audiences, and potentially very different responses.

Subtle or obvious, planned or unintentional, architecture has the power to

communicate. Indeed, as Victor Hugo espoused in his epic novel *Notre-Dame de Paris*,

> before the fifteenth century, architecture was considered a book of stone,
>
> so solid and so durable . . . the great book of humanity, the principal
>
> expression of man in his different stages of development, either as a force
>
> or as an intelligence. . . . [It] was the great handwriting of the human race.
>
> (bk. 5, ch. 2)

Though Hugo may have been accurate in his prediction that the advent of the printing

press would cause architecture to lose its dominance in representing mankind so artfully,

architecture still has considerable power to communicate, as evidenced by the

aforementioned examples. Undeniably, architecture has the ability to speak loudly about

a civilization because its unique history and culture are written all over it—it is simply a matter of "reading" what it has to say; yet to rightly "interpret" its message(s), a hermeneutic of architecture is essential.

Churches Communicate

The composition of a church is no different than the preceding examples of architecture as rhetoric.[2] How a church is designed communicates much about the beliefs of those who commission her and congregate within her. Bruggink and Droppers asserted that

> architecture for churches is a matter of Gospel. A church that is interested in proclaiming the Gospel must also be interested in architecture, for year after year the architecture of the church proclaims a message that either augments the preached Word or conflicts with it (1). . . . A church is a place where God's people gather together to worship Him, and how they worship, as well as what they believe, is either reinforced or undermined by the architecture. Church architecture is therefore first and foremost a matter of theology rather than a matter of style. (6)

Additionally, church architecture has numerous functions:

> Church architecture, then, works in many ways. It means to give shape and substance to the truths of Christian faith. It is the expression of Christian identity in a particular culture. It aims to stimulate communication both within the community of the faithful and with the

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[2] Though the term "church" is frequently used to describe the body of believers in Christ, in this thesis it will be used to refer to the actual building in which Christians gather.

world in which they live and work. Finally it works to orientate

Christian existence as a mission and a "con-vocation." It is most

obviously a place of gathering, but also a place from which to go out. In

all this, the Church structures space so that the sacred dimension of life

can breathe the truth of faith and be the space where the identity,

community and mission of believers can be encouragingly expressed.

(Kelly 425)

From the external design to the internal, churches communicate much to those

who contemplate taking part of what they offer.

Places of worship, especially, are not only for the gathering of the faithful,

they often represent what the faithful believe and stand as sermons in

stone. . . . Their ornate iconography on each façade, portal, and tower can

be "read" as a visual exegesis of theological messages. Their interiors,

likewise, reflect theology through statuary, stained glass, light, carved

screens, and altars. (Ragsdale 7)

The external can clearly pronounce the building's identity as a church or conversely

demonstrate that it is not to be relegated into one particular role but versatile, open to

other potential roles. The external can also convey the strength of its welcome, whether

open and inviting, cold and indifferent, or somewhere in between. The internal design

has the ability to offer even greater opportunity to speak to its audience, in both feeling

and function. The interior of a church incorporates emotive factors that play upon the

senses to stimulate a wide range of emotions, such as awe and contrition, comfort and

security, peace and joy. These emotive factors can include lighting, texture, scale, color,

artwork, and more. The interior of a church also employs liturgical factors to proclaim what, and how, those within profess to believe. Predominantly, the pulpit, altar, and font are what most loudly express the doctrine of the church, with the placement and prominence of these features revealing a church's views and beliefs behind Word and Sacrament.

A Brief History of Church Architecture

Early Christians, mostly Jews who embraced the teachings of Christ, were heavily influenced by Jewish tradition in both worship practices and physical setting. Little is known of their actual worship setting, as they met where they could, having been forced out of the temple and synagogues for their "heretical" teachings, as well as later being subject to persecution. In fact, from the commencement of Nero's persecution of Christians in 64 AD until after the destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70 AD, Christians often met only secretively and sporadically, wherever might be safest for them. However, what is known of their gatherings demonstrates that they incorporated spaces for the preached Word, the sacramental meal, and the baptismal rite in whatever venue they found themselves able to gather, be it shop, cave, or home (Potente and Zersen 17). For example, meeting in a believer's home was common in the formative years of Christianity, where frequently a desk might serve as pulpit for the Word, a table serve as altar, and a simple basin for baptismal font.

In the post-apostolic era, the church became more structured, and theology and worship practices began to have an impact upon art and architecture, influenced by the Greco-Roman style. At this time "Christians increasingly expressed their theology, faith and hope visually" (Potente and Zersen 20). The scant evidence of house churches from

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this time shows how individual rooms were more officially designated for a baptistery, an "ambo" (for the reading of Scripture), and a dining area to observe the Eucharist (21). Additionally, frescoes of Biblical scenes and other ornamentation abounded in these designated rooms, with "visual lessons everywhere providing sermons for the eyes; the meanings behind images, symbols and pictures teaching the faith" (23).

In the post-Constantinian era, Christianity went from being "tolerated" via the Edict of Milan in 313 AD to being the religion of the entire Roman Empire via royal decree in 380 AD, and with this leap came significant church growth and change in church architecture.[3] Most notably, this era produced basilicas that used rectangles to form a Latin cross—a long central rectangular nave, with side rectangles, and a rectangle in front for the altar area. Additionally, "frescoes adorned walls and pillars to provide instruction as well as to encourage a mood of awe" (Potente and Zersen 25). Consistent with all prior churches, the font, altar, and pulpit were the key appointments.

In the Medieval era, the greatest new focus of church architecture was great length and great height, and often, great light (Potente and Zersen 25). Both the Romanesque style with its "masculine" characteristics and the Gothic style with its "feminine" characteristics employed their design elements to "claim a glory and splendor for the sacrifice at the altar" (25). This period also introduced leaded glass depicting Biblical stories and sculpture pertaining to tenants of the church such as final judgment, the saints, and Christ's life. During the Middle Ages, church art had a greater

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[3] A notable edifice built between these times was the Hagia Sophia ("Holy Wisdom"), built by Emperor Constantius, son of Emperor Constantinos I, and opened for services in 360 AD. Of particular note, it reflected the rounded and domed architecture of the East.

concentration on death, the Last Judgment, and Christ's suffering rather than on life, heaven, and Christ's victory over death. Also, while the font, altar, and pulpit were still key appointments, they were more distanced from the people.

The Renaissance prompted a return to Roman architecture, with an emphasis on precision and proportion. Churches built or remodeled in this period boasted classical elements, such as columns, pillars, and arches. Additionally, the dome was a new favorite in church architecture, St. Peter's Basilica being the most renowned example of this style, with its dome the tallest in the world. The goal during this time was "to create structures that would appeal to both emotion and reason. . . . [Thus,] architecture was not merely a means of constructing buildings; it was a way to create meaning" (Department of European Paintings). To assist in fulfilling this goal, artwork was profusely incorporated in these churches: reliefs, sculpture, and paintings, like that of legendary Renaissance artist Michelangelo. Once more, the liturgical factors, font, altar, and pulpit, remained the constant, only differing in greater ornamentation.

The Reformation era brought further change in church architecture. Some of the change started with the great reformer Martin Luther in response to his trip to Rome, where he saw an extravagance of the papacy yet a paucity of the Gospel and thus sought to restore the centrality of the historic church's Christ-centered message over and above the extremes in adornment of the temporal building. Additionally, a focus on community was propagated, as well as a belief that the church was where "God's people shelter and adorn their liturgies" (Potente and Zersen 26). The three main liturgical appointments, font, altar, and pulpit, retained their prominence, though without the adornment of previous times and with somewhat greater importance placed on the pulpit. Much like

the Iconoclasts of the eighth century, the Calvinists especially rejected the adornment of earlier days because of their understanding of following God's law in regard to "graven images" (Latourette 989). Thus, these latter reformers introduced simpler churches with an almost meeting hall style about them.

In the early part of the Modern era, the Enlightenment influenced church architecture still further, its rationalistic method questioning the unseen and doubting matters of faith, such as miracles and the transcendent. Only the immanent was evident in most church architecture built in this time. The designers of these churches were

> incapable of addressing the deeper, mystical knowledge of the faith, much
> less the human soul's yearning for the mystery of transcendent beauty.
> Rather, they [fell] into a reductionist mentality, stripping the churches of
> those elements, symbols, and images that speak silently to the human
> heart. (Schloeder, "What Happened to Church Architecture?" 29)

The end result was church architecture that resembled concert halls or lecture halls, void of the communicative power of emotive and liturgical factors. In more recent times, the embracing of Modern Architecture fueled this trend. It advocated a "socialistic, reductionist, materialist philosophy" that viewed individuals as "economic units" not as "rational, volitional beings with capacities for imagination, memory, and aesthetic participation in Divine Beauty" (35-36). Its strictly functional approach, alien to the human spirit and the Divine purposes of the church, produced churches for "multi-functional" uses, from worship to meetings or receptions . . . to a rousing game of basketball.

Today, there appear to be two dominant emergent trends in church architecture, two very different trends: one, a return to the emotive and liturgical factors of the past and the other, a move toward dynamic programs, performances, and events. On the one hand, the 1965 Second Vatican Council in the Roman Catholic Church, as well as a liturgical renewal in many mainline Christian churches, have motivated numerous churches to reintroduce the concept of expressing theology through art and architecture (Potente and Zersen 27). On the other hand, the widespread apparent success of megachurch leaders, such as Joel Osteen and Rick Warren, has inspired many churches to model themselves after the megachurch example. With two such diverse styles of church design, are there also two very diverse messages being conveyed? What does the architecture of each movement communicate? And what are the features each use to reinforce that message?

<u>Significance</u>

Whether churches or monuments or community centers or government buildings, "places" have an impact on people. As early as the 1960s, social scientists began to study this impact, developing terms such as "spatial identity" and "place identity" to explain the influences that a particular place has on an individual's thinking, attitudes, and identity (Carr, Francis, Rivlin, and Stone 193). Environmental autobiographies have been published that advance the idea that experiences and memories from different places have a significant effect on people's lives. Since human activity is "place-based," it is beneficial to better understand the relationship between buildings and the people who populate them. The rhetorical field is uniquely qualified to contribute to this

understanding by revealing the power of the nonverbal, its tools and its results—the "communication" that transpires.

To aid in this pursuit, this rhetorical critique will take a look at architectural communication, focusing specifically on Christian church architecture across the United States in order to shed some light on the messages being broadcast and the profession of faith being espoused by the abundant nonverbal rhetoric inside and outside of church walls. Churches are certainly "places" that carve out "spaces" for a variety of rhetorical expression: prayer, meditation, communion, preaching, et cetera. So, what are the nonverbal "tools" a church has at its disposal to "speak" to its audience? How are these "tools" implemented? What is the impact of employing such devices? There is need for a vocabulary of architecture and a hermeneutic to read it to help find the answers to such questions and benefit both those seeking to "build what they preach" and those seeking a church in which they "see what they believe."

Finding answers to the aforementioned questions is particularly important in a country where church growth remains a steady constant. According to the most recent Gallup poll, 78% of Americans consider themselves Christian (Newport). With almost eight out of ten Americans identifying with the Christian faith, there exists a potentially large audience to house. In support of this assertion, the latest studies demonstrated a recent increase in church plants, an increase that has outpaced the rate of churches closing their doors (McConnell). So despite the over 300,000 Christian churches already in existence across the United States, there is demand for more to accommodate the ever-larger body of believers (Smietana; Dart 14). Likewise, such a reportedly large body of believers requiring a church home indicates that at any given time a significant number of

them may be searching for that home, especially as only 63% of Americans said that they considered themselves members of any one church (Newport). Accordingly, contributing to research on the rhetoric of church architecture might help those seeking to build a church understand how best to teach nonverbally through their place of worship, as well as how to reinforce their profession of faith. Such a study may also help those seeking to find a church understand how what they see is generally what they get, i.e., that a church's architecture reveals much of its theology and practices.

Through the Lens of Ideological Criticism

Employing ideological criticism seems an apt approach to study the visual rhetoric of Christian church architecture. For "when rhetorical critics are interested in rhetoric primarily for what it suggests about beliefs and values, their focus is on ideology" (Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism* 238). This critique, questioning what church architecture communicates about the beliefs expressed within, will certainly address that which is the primary goal of an ideological critique—"to discover and make visible the dominant ideology or ideologies embedded in an artifact and the ideologies that are being muted in it" (Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism* 243). Wander urged critical theorists to use an ideological view to sort out the meaning and benefit of an artifact based on its historical context and how it might contribute to improving the human race (18). Accordingly, the following critique will also explore what possible attitudes and actions are encouraged by the manner in which different churches express their interpretation of the Christian message through the design and appointments of their edifices.

Critiquing an artifact in light of its ideological nature is a twofold process: "(1) identifying the nature of the ideology; and (2) identifying strategies in support of the

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ideology" (Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism* 244). In regard to the first step, there are several central areas to where beliefs may be made manifest: membership, activities, goals, values/norms, position, and resources (244). However, for the purposes of this study, the "values/norms" category will be most important because religious ideology focuses on values. Consequently, the main values of what is being communicated through church architecture will be established first to understand the ideology being communicated. After the nature of the ideology is made known, an in-depth look at what strategies are implemented to support that ideology will be addressed. Of particular import in this critique will be the ideas of "communicative genre," "content," and "style." For example, a church is a very specific kind of genre where ideological implications are expected: how does the building and appointments support or hinder the actual ideology being professed? A church can also be ornate and filled with iconography or simple and filled with only the bare essentials: how does the choice of content increase or decrease the persuasiveness of an artifact's ideology? Likewise, a church can harbor a specific style or even an amalgamation of styles: how do the stylistic devices affect the presentation of the ideology?

While ideographs, the symbols representing an ideology, were originally used in verbal rhetoric, they can readily be discerned in the visual. A visual ideograph is a representation that can be used in discourse to emphasize a particular value, ground claims being asserted, and frame cultural norms for behavior in whatever venue they are utilized (Olson, Finnegan, and Hope 101). This definition is fitting for interpreting a church building, a place in which values, truth claims, and cultural norms abound. So what values are emphasized in the ideographs incorporated into churches? How do those

same ideographs ground the truth claims asserted? And in what way are cultural norms

framed by the ideographs? An ideological criticism endeavors to answer these questions,

and as "visual rhetoric is of vital importance for [those] interested in understanding the

dynamics of public persuasion . . . [and it] occupies a central place within the

interconnected dynamics of civic, cultural, and social discourse," understanding the

ideology of this form of rhetoric is important (2-3).

<div align="center">Longinus on Transcendence</div>

While the focus of a critique on architecture that is created for the purpose of

faith-based practices seems custom-made for ideological reading, it is equally well suited

for an approach using the concept of the "sublime." Typically attributed to Dionysius

Cassius Longinus of Athens in the third century, *On the Sublime* significantly contributed

to the rhetorical discussion of using emotive factors to reach an audience—to rouse, to

inspire, to transport. Unlike his earlier sophist predecessors, Longinus not only espoused

the power of emotion but also the concern for the link between subject matter and

emotional content (Herrick 113).   In keeping with this, his sense of "the sublime stressed

the spiritual over the material, and delicacy and grace over the crude and simple" (Smith,

Rhetoric 143).

Although the five sources of the sublime that Longinus expounded revolved

around the written and oral word, they easily can be adapted to visual rhetoric,

particularly church architecture in its attempt to transcend. For example, the first and

most important source Longinus designated was "grandeur of thought," and church

architecture has at its roots the grandest of thought, that of the triune God—Father, Son

and Holy Spirit. Another example of the sublime's application to architecture is the

<div align="center">19</div>

fourth source, "noble and graceful manner of expression, which is not only to choose out significant and elegant words, but also to adorn and embellish" (*Dionysius* 67). Architecture, too, can be appreciated for its "noble and graceful manner of expression," as well as for its adornment and embellishment. Similarly, the other sources of the sublime can readily apply to a critique on church architecture.

This application of the sublime is especially apropos for critiquing the emotive factors churches incorporate into their buildings and appointments; for Longinus contended that "nothing so much raises discourse, as a fine pathos seasonably applied. It animates a whole performance with uncommon life and spirit, and gives mere words the force (as it were) of inspiration[4]" (70). Thus analysis of the sublime can help reveal the emotive factors being incorporated into church buildings and how they reach, or fail to reach, the sublime and, therefore, how they might impact the church attendee. Additionally, this critique can also be effective in looking at the liturgical factors churches include, especially in the placement and prestige of those appointments. The fifth source of the sublime "which completes all the preceding [sources], is the structure or composition of all the periods, in all possible dignity and grandeur" and focuses on dignified and distinguished arrangement (*Dionysius* 67). Accordingly, looking at the liturgical factors through this lens can help determine how they, too, reach, or fail to reach, the sublime and what impact they might have.

"Elevation" and "transcendence" were two key concepts Longinus dwelt upon in *On the Sublime*. He believed that using language to elevate subject matter, or the

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[4] In the time period of this quote (circa the first century AD) the term "inspiration," from the Latin "inspiritu," would have literally meant in or of the spirit, something influenced by that which is divine.

implementation of exceptional and emotive discourse, might allow one to "transcend" the mundane, the ordinary. He even went as far as to suggest that realizing "the sublime makes near approaches to the height of God" (*Dionysius* 192). Hence, just as Longinus was interested in "the impact that literature combining emotion combined with great ideas had on readers," so this critique pursues the impact that Christian church architecture combining emotion combined with great ideas has on viewers (Herrick 112). In other words, how does architecture help "elevate" one to "transcend" the temporal?

<p align="center">Artifact Selection Criteria</p>

To begin deciphering the rhetoric of church architecture, it was first necessary to gather a significant sampling of churches to examine and compare. For the purposes of this study, an inductive approach proved the best way to gather such a compilation. Accordingly, information and photographs of sundry churches were somewhat randomly accumulated. The material was then analyzed to determine common patterns and regularities within the sampling of churches to formulate some tentative categories to explore. Lastly, this process allowed for the development of some general conclusions regarding the visual rhetoric of churches.

However, with reportedly over 300,000 churches in existence across the United States, it was necessary to place some parameters on the sampling of churches used in the research of this paper (Smietana; Dart 14). First, only church bodies that could be defined by the following definition of "Christian" were considered: a Christian is a follower of Christ and His Word (the Bible), who believes that by nature there is one God who exists in three persons—God the Father, creator of all things; God the Son, true Man and true God, who died and rose again for the salvation of all people; and God the Holy

Spirit, who calls, enlightens, and sanctifies people in the faith.[5] This criteria ruled out

church groups such as the Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, and Unitarians, as they do not

hold to all of the aforementioned Christian tenants. The second criteria was to select

denominations which best represented the largest number of believers; thus, the sampling

was narrowed down to predominantly Catholic, evangelical, and mainline churches.

Third, due to the vast number of megachurches springing up across the nation, the artifact

sampling was designed to include megachurches, and those patterning themselves after

this more contemporary style, as well as more traditional churches. Lastly, as California

and Texas are home to the greatest number of megachurches, a preponderance of

churches from these areas was incorporated, with a smattering of others from across the

country (Helfand A41).

<div align="center">Orientation</div>

The following thesis will endeavor to contribute to the growing field of study in

visual rhetoric by examining how the rhetoric of church architecture speaks to the

ideology of those within. The ensuing chapters will focus on three distinct aspects of

church rhetoric. The first of these chapters will address the exterior of churches,

including the grounds, entrance, and narthex that precede the entrance into the church

proper. In the second chapter, the emotive factors employed in churches will be

investigated, including their prevalence or scarcity. The third chapter will analyze the

liturgical elements, or lack thereof, incorporated in the church sanctuary, including their

placement and prominence. Finally, a summary of the implications of this thesis for

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[5] This definition is based off the Apostles' Creed, a widely accepted statement of the Christian faith.

rhetorical theory, for theology, for architecture, and for the churchgoer will be presented

in a concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 2

THE EXTERIOR

First impressions are important; they often set the tone for what is to come, and

once formed, they are difficult to change. Whether a handshake—strong and firm or

weak and sweaty, a first encounter—warm and friendly or cool and superficial, or an

introduction to a public speech—strong and sure or timid and uncertain, one never gets a

second chance at a first impression. The same is true with regard to the first impression

people form of a building into which they have cause to enter. For example, a building

with grounds that are overgrown, an entryway that is dilapidated, and a reception area

that is unkempt creates a negative first impression and may cause people to be disinclined

to either enter the establishment or pursue a relationship with the individuals within. On

the other hand, a building with manicured grounds, an inviting entrance and/or foyer, and

an overall well maintained appearance creates a positive first impression, enticing people

to enter in and take part of what the establishment has to offer.

Likewise, the exterior of a church has the capacity to either help or hinder

entrance to the interior, as well as the ability to influence the receptiveness of those

contemplating entry. Outer elements of a church, such as the grounds, the narthex and

commons, the structure itself, and even the parking lot, contribute to the first impression

prospective churchgoers form—they are a church's first line of communication long

before even a glimpse of the interior is seen. Therefore, before an in-depth critique of the

interior can commence, a brief overview of the rhetoric of the extrinsic visual elements of a church should be addressed. This chapter will thus cover the following components and how they contribute to the overall rhetorical conversation: first, the grounds and parking; then, the church building itself, with its exterior features, narthex, and commons.

<u>Church Grounds</u>

Popular DIY (do-it-yourself) shows, such as *Curb Appeal*, *Designed to Sell*, and *Yard Crashers*, emphasize the importance of a home's grounds, or "curb appeal." Curb appeal includes the landscaping, lawn care, painting, and cleanliness of a property to increase its attractiveness, its appeal. Attention to these things can even increase the value of a home. Why? Because it forms people's first impressions of a home; it sets the tone for the rest of the home; and it invites people in—or drives them away. Furthermore, if people form a bad first impression from seeing the exterior, that negativity follows them into the interior (Cornett pt. 3). In the same way, a church's grounds impact those outside: is the landscaping lush and inviting or overgrown and unappealing? Is there litter and clutter all about, or are the grounds clean and well taken care of? Though the location and environment in which a church is established necessarily bear upon what can be done on any given church's grounds, every church has the ability to make the most of what they have *and* to take care of what they have, thus the ability to influence onlookers' first impressions.

<u>Landscaping</u>

From the beginning, attention to the beauty of the land was taken into account: "The Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; . . . [He] made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye" (Concordia Self-Study

Bible, Gen. 2.8-9a). As visual creatures, humans also attend to the beauty of the land and endeavor to incorporate that beauty into their environment, as well as seek it out. The use of such natural elements can even have an ideological significance—a subtle stylistic device to relay a particular ideology. Accordingly, it is natural for people to be drawn more to churches that employ greater natural elements on the land dedicated to the purpose of worshiping the Creator of such gifts than churches that are minimalistic in their landscaping. The inclusion of a variety of vegetation, such as flowers, shrubs, and trees, as well as water features, rocks, and stone, communicates an appreciation of what God has created and thus provides the would-be churchgoer a sense that the community within the church takes seriously the command to be good stewards of God's creation.

Many landscaping elements may be utilized to make a church more "pleasing to the eye," such as raised flower beds, rock gardens, stone pathways, and fountains. Additionally, attention to design principles, such as balance, proportion, unity, color, and texture, can further enhance the beauty and appeal of a church. Attention to these landscaping elements and principles works toward a positive first impression, one that invites the passerby to stop, look, and perhaps stay awhile. More specific to church properties is the incorporation of religious statuary, memorials, meditation gardens, and the like. These types of features can help beautify the property, as well as identify its purpose—a place designated as a space for worship.

The research for this thesis yielded a wide variety of landscaping styles. There were churches with expansive land sites that boasted a luxurious park-like feel and others with little spare property to dedicate to even the barest of landscaping (see Figures 1 and 2). Then there were those with clear landscaping design in regard to balance, proportion,

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and purpose, and those with no apparent rhyme or reason. Additionally, there were churches with landscaping that made an unmistakable statement about who they were and what they were about, featuring statuary, symbols, and design elements that evidenced their religious nature (see Figures 3 and 4).

These last churches were markedly easier to "read," with their manmade features imposed upon the natural elements serving as clues to the ideology taught within the church proper. However, all of the churches visually communicated much through the various modes of landscaping. For while no discernable pattern emerged in classifying a particular type of church with a particular type of landscaping, each church made some sort of statement through its landscaping design.

Whatever landscaping techniques a church employs, the land should be properly maintained. Trees, bushes, or other vegetation that have grown to a point where they partially or fully obscure pathways, signs, windows, or doors not only impede physical entrance into the church but mentally impede entrance as well. Such overgrowth communicates neglect, apathy, and/or disrespect toward the property and its function. In most cases, the average passerby then imagines the interior to be in similar disarray and considers the occupants indifferent to what they are about. For unlike a neighbor who might be infirm or otherwise unable to mange the upkeep of his personal property, a church houses numerous individuals capable of offering time, talent, or treasure to ensure that their place of worship is beautiful inside and out.

Maintenance

Rusted railings, peeling paint, cracked concrete, stained sidewalks, and other offensive eyesores on church grounds all communicate negatively to would-be

churchgoers. Neglected repairs and improvements, especially when in abundance, may not only give people pause to enter a church but also cause them to wonder about the faith and commitment of the people inside. A newcomer may see the disrepair of God's house as a sign that those within have neither a proper relationship with Him nor respect of Him, not if they treat what He has provided so poorly.

It is the same with the cleanliness of the church and grounds. Cobwebs over the entrance, dust caked on the windowsills, flowerbeds overrun with weeds, unmown lawns, and dead bugs in the light fixtures all communicate apathy on the part of the members and cause visitors to question the members' regard for the house of God. If cleaning and repairs are significantly neglected, visitors may also wonder if the care of neighbor, soul, or mission is likewise neglected. To avoid the first line of communication being so negative, both buildings and property need constant upkeep to be able to project an inviting appearance and make a positive first impression on those contemplating entry—one that speaks of the members' commitment and respect toward their place of worship.

Parking Facilities

The mall at Christmas time, a university during the first three weeks of a new semester, a stadium hosting a professional playoff game—what do these places have in common? Potential parking problems—possibly big enough to spoil an individual's anticipated experience at the intended destination. Struggling to find parking, worrying about possible theft, wondering where to go, and paying inflated fees can certainly diminish the enthusiasm one might have harbored for a holiday shopping spree, meeting professors and classmates, or seeing the big game. Clearly, parking can play a part of first impressions also. While the parking situation for the exemplified special occasions

is perhaps difficult to avoid altogether, much *can* be done to help an establishment's parking lot be "user-friendly" and make a positive first impression. For example, does the lot have ample spaces for the number of people attending? Does the lot address the needs of the physically impaired? Is the lot well lit and well maintained to help instill a sense of security? If the lot is extensive or set apart from the building it serves, does it have clear signs indicating where to go? How establishments deal with these issues contribute to how well they communicate the strength of their welcome to the public.

Churches also speak to their community via the care and attention they pay the design and maintenance of their parking facilities. Upon gauging the needs of the community they serve, whether urban, suburban, or rural, the regulations of the community in which they reside, and the expanse with which they have to work, how do churches attend to this aspect of their visual appeal? In this research, parking lots were found to vary significantly, depending on their location, as well as the numbers and needs they serve, but all posed a rhetorical "statement" about the churches they serve. Some of the designs, and subsequent messages, were simple and direct, and others complex and divergent.

In general, megachurches tended to have large, sprawling lots. In fact, as entertaining large crowds is part of the megachurch vision, parking has become one of the biggest common denominators in these churches: Gilmore, the architect who revamped an abandoned Hughes aircraft facility in West Covina for Faith Community, said of the megachurch phenomenon, "Frankly, they are looking for places that have enough parking. That's the driving force" (qtd. in Vrana). On the positive side, this generous allotment of parking stalls communicates both a readiness and willingness to

serve large numbers, including the physically challenged. The need for so many stalls

may also speak to the success of the church, though perhaps not if the lot is sparsely

populated during scheduled services and events. On the negative side, the expansive lots,

most with little to no visual relief from row upon row of asphalt stalls, prompt images of

long walks (considerably more concerning in inclement weather or ill health), searches

for "lost" cars, and slow moving mass exoduses. These images generate feelings more

reminiscent of the pandemonium of amusement parks and professional ballparks than the

gathering of sinners seeking communion with God. In fact, this first line of

communication seems more apt for preparing an individual for some sort of spectacle or

show than for receiving Word and Sacrament.

One striking example of this potential "stage setting" was megachurch leader Joel

Osteen's church in Houston, Texas. The parking facilities of Lakewood Church were

particularly extensive, both in quantity and distance from the facility. As parking was

predominantly underground, a visitor's experience starts in a fumy, low-ceilinged garage,

with little help discerning where best to park or which way the church lies. Then,

depending on which lot was chosen, the trek to the church may take one to the back door

of the facility or require even further walking to gain access elsewhere. Acknowledging

the complexity of the parking situation, the church's website even offers a list of things to

watch for, including a warning to not leave vehicles unattended for any long periods and

a suggestion to make note of where one parks. The entire experience is reminiscent of

the parking arrangements one might encounter when attending a Ticketmaster event. As

the building, once known as the Compaq Center, was formerly a multi-purpose sports

arena for five professional sports franchises, it is not entirely surprising that the parking

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experience might reflect that. However, the vast, businesslike parking facilities of most other megachurches demonstrated that Lakewood Church was not an anomaly. Overall, such parking lots were the norm for megachurches, and whether intentional or not, desired or not, their size and design mentally prepare the individual more for a show than for worship.

On the other hand, churches not part of the megachurch phenomenon tended to have smaller, simpler parking resources that often included small lots (at least as compared to the megachurches), street parking, and sometimes grass or gravel areas. Unlike the uniform striping and clearly marked special stalls that were observed in most megachurch lots, these smaller lots more broadly varied between having well-designated parking spaces to having no designation at all. On the positive side, the smaller scale nature of these lots held no real concern about walking very far, forgetting where a car was parked, or struggling to find the church once parked. Rather, the less daunting size and more informal nature of these lots rendered a sense of community, as if one were gathering together with neighbors or family for a friendly affair. On the negative side, the more diminutive size of these parking facilities might communicate that the churches they serve are hard-pressed to accommodate their own number and thus not as willing or able to welcome visitors as churches with extensive facilities.

Size difference was the most noticeable common division of churches in regard to their parking facilities—the monstrous lots seeming to suggest that one was preparing to see a show, the modest lots that one was preparing to commune with his neighbor. Otherwise, the "language" of church parking facilities' varied greatly from church to church. The lots that were poorly designed or maintained were somewhat off-putting;

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while the more utilitarian lots were neutral in their "tone," neither particularly inviting

nor uninviting (see Figure 5). However, the lots that were set up to relieve the monotony

of a sea of parking stalls, whether by clever lot design, medians of plant life, or other

devices, bid the individual to enter and stay awhile (see Figure 6). These different

approaches to dealing with parking, dealing with the necessities of "doing business,"

resulted in different messages being relayed to the public. Although a basic requirement

of any establishment serving the masses, a parking lot is still part of the first line of

communication that a church possesses to make a favorable impression on its would-be

worshippers and help usher them to the door.

The Church Structure

While the grounds and parking facilities contribute to the external visual rhetoric

of a church, the outer features of the building itself contribute significantly more—often

announcing to the surrounding neighborhood what it is, what it is about, and how

significant it believes its mission to be. Proportions, building materials, windows, doors,

and rooftops can help in that announcement, as well as proclaim much about the

convictions of the community that utilizes the building they grace.

> There is an indissoluble connection between what [is] built and what [is]
>
> believed. A sermon lasts only for a few moments; a building lasts for
>
> generations. A message in brick and wood and stone, it reaches across the
>
> decades as a statement of faith that spans generations. That's why the
>
> connection between theology and architecture is so important. That's why
>
> church architecture is always a matter of the Gospel. There is no such
>
> thing as a theologically neutral church building. (A. White)

The exterior of the building is where the confession of faith begins. Like the grounds and parking facilities, the "face" of the building can be welcoming, inviting one and all inside, or unwelcoming, causing one to think twice about entering; but more significantly, this "first line of communication" bears witness to the message that is preached within. Indeed, the examination of the exterior of the church buildings selected for this study was where Christian churches started to fall into two distinct categories— those that *looked* like churches and made a bold declaration of faith and those that were *not* readily discerned as churches and made no clear statement as to what they professed.

The churches that looked like churches were predominantly vertically oriented, reaching heavenward and drawing the eye to God on high. The Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Houston, Texas, and St. Innocent Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Anchorage, Alaska, both exemplified (in very different ways) the towering rooftop design that draws attention upward to that which is beyond humankind's reach (see Figures 7 and 8). While not all of the churches that fell into this category had as prominent vertical proportions as these two examples, the overarching trend was the incorporation of height, whether through steeples, domes, towers, or other device. This architectural feature is in line with the "grandeur of thought" that Longinus counted as a source of the sublime; for the soaring pinnacles of the churches in this category elevate awareness beyond the earthly realm.

In addition, these peaks were generally adorned with crosses, proclaiming to all passersby the basic religious ideology of the facility (see Figures 7-10). The cross, one of the earliest and most widely used Christian symbols, is recognized as the instrument that God used to sacrifice "His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not

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perish but have eternal life" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, John 3.16). Thus, the cross

bears witness to God's infinite love for sinful humanity. It is a poignant reminder of

Christ's sufferings to wash away the sins of the world, conquer sin, death, and the power

of the devil, and open the way to eternal life for man. Therefore, these churches, which

boast one or more crosses on their exterior, decisively proclaim for Whom and what they

stand.

Stained glass windows were additional adornments most of these "churchly"

edifices utilized to further declare the establishments' religious ideology. Whether the

panels were simple and held a single illustration or elaborate and held a collage of

illustrations, tenants of the Christian faith, church history, and/or Biblical stories and

characters were displayed for all to discern the purpose of the building—to gather for

spiritual illumination and worship. For example, Figure 11 is an example of a more

simplistic form of stained glass that bears a single illustration, that of Christ as the Good

Shepherd finding and securing the lost. While Figure 12 is a far more ornate work, it also

portrays a single illustration, that of the ascending Savior, triumphing over death, sin, and

the devil. Figure 13 is ornate as well but more complex than a single illustration, visually

telling the story of St. Lorenz who, in defiance of the government's demand to turn over

the treasures of the church, gave the money to the poor and presented his congregation,

the children of God, as the true treasure of the church. Overall, the utilization of stained

glass aids in both communicating the purpose of these buildings and bearing witness to

what is confessed within them.

Whether traditional or modern, ornate or simple, the churches that possessed any

of the aforementioned features, or other less commonplace telltale signs, could

unmistakably be identified as churches. In contrast, the churches that were *not* readily

discerned as churches lacked these "churchly" identifiers. Typically the churches that

fell into this category had neither the vertical height nor the outer adornment of the

"church manifest." Instead, most of these churches were horizontally situated, sprawling

outward rather than upward, despite many times being multistoried. Additionally, while

windows were certainly a feature in the outer design of these churches, they generally did

not make any kind of theological statement about the building or its use; neither did the

rooftops, bare of crosses, speak to the confession within. Frequently there was little

outward indication communicating the purpose of these facilities. In fact, "reading" the

exterior of one of these buildings might easily cause one to mistake it for an office

complex, theater, shopping center, or even college campus (see Figures 14-17).

Accordingly, discerning what the churches in this second category were

communicating via their exterior was more challenging. This first line of communication

lacked any noticeable confession of faith; they were merely buildings labeled as

churches. Predominantly, they were large, professional buildings that spoke more of

status than of purpose. Perhaps the exclusion of the classic telltale signs that have been

associated with churches for centuries was a very deliberate move—an attempt to

disassociate with "churches of old" and offer something new. The more neutral design of

these types of churches could be less off-putting to the unchurched. In fact, the

unchurched may be drawn to a facility that looks more like the type of places they

frequent than a church whose doorway they may never have darkened. Yet, this might be

construed as a type of "false advertising," generating dissonance between what is seen

and what is taught. Or, it might indicate that what lies within truly is something new, a departure from ancient Christianity.

Both categories of churches, while very different structurally, had the same opportunity to visually extend a welcome to the public. In regard to this welcome, churches varied less categorically and more individually. Some of the churches were more daunting than inviting and some quite winsome and welcoming. For example, a significant part of these churches' appeal, or lack thereof, was the approach to the entry and the common area people might gather before or after services.

Narthex and Commons

Sometimes one and the same, sometimes two distinct spaces, the narthex and/or common area of a church act as a "kind of buffer between the street and the assembly space," catering to a variety of needs, such as a place to greet one another before or after services, a place to post announcements or distribute literature, a place to serve refreshments, and a place where the individual "'shakes off' the street and enters into the liturgical world beyond" (Potente and Zersen 34). Like the other outer elements of a church, these areas are also part of a church's first line of communication. Does one feel welcomed? Does one feel compelled to proceed into the church proper? Does one feel inspired to see, hear, and learn more? How do the narthex and/or commons speak to the potential churchgoer?

Narthex

The vast majority of Christian churches have some sort of narthex, or vestibule, preceding entry into the main sanctuary. In years past, this area might have accommodated the catechumens (those not yet in communion fellowship) or other

penitents not officially tied to the church and thus not permitted entry to the church proper; however, the purpose of this "antechamber" has transitioned over the years. The modern narthex serves more as a lobby or foyer. A narthex frequently has literature relevant to the beliefs and services/programs of the church readily available. A narthex may offer a place to hang up coats, hats, and scarves or perhaps a place to sit for conversing or resting. A narthex is generally where one is first welcomed—by an usher, elder, or assigned greeter. A narthex is also where individuals might register their attendance, for a Sunday or mid-week service, a funeral, or a wedding. Being such a multifunctional space necessitates that the narthex be designed in an efficient, effective manner, but it is equally important that it be designed to communicate positively about the congregation's friendliness and sincerity—especially considering "the Barna Research Group reports that 40 percent of visitors make up their minds about a church before they see the pastor" (Owen).

As with the outer structure of the church, the narthex revealed two separate design styles, furthering the distinction between the two emerging categories of churches. One of the most significant differences was the greater ecclesiastical embellishment in the narthexes of churches more traditional in nature as compared to that in the new megachurches.[1] Another notable distinction was the complete separation of narthex and sanctuary that most megachurches adopted, frequently not even featuring a window to see what lay beyond. Furthermore, the megachurches typically dedicated a vastly larger

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[1] The term "traditional" is used in this paper to differentiate between the more historical style of church and the growing megachurch phenomenon; it does *not* imply a particular architectural style.

amount of square footage to their narthexes, housing an area large enough to accommodate more than the usual narthex functions, and frequently doing just that.

For example, walking into the Woodlands Church located in The Woodlands, Texas, people are greeted by an expansive lobby, complete with a large information booth manned throughout the week to help members and visitors alike navigate the sprawling campus and/or learn about the numerous programs/activities offered. This area is cut off from the main place of worship by doors and walls devoid of any windows or other openings. Bare also of any religious symbols, visitors might indeed need the information booth to be assured that they have come to the right place to attend services. Across the board, this businesslike design was quite predominant for megachurches and for those remodeling or restructuring their facilities to emulate this new church trend. So what does this style say about these churches? What message is being conveyed to the would-be churchgoer?

Professional in every way, the narthexes, or lobbies, of megachurches were bright, modern, and spacious, featuring sizeable restrooms, literature carousels or niches, information centers, and more. In fact, some were so large and diverse as to house bookstores and/or coffee shops (see Figure 18). Lakewood Church even had a bank of escalators from the ground floor lobby to the second floor lobby, as well as multiple elevators (see Figure 19). However, despite being clean and professional, these lobbies "spoke" more of a well-run business than of a church that preaches the good news of Christ and His gifts. The stylish décor may have "spoken" to the success of the establishment but lacked the type of ornamentation or symbols that might bear witness to the purpose of the facility. In fact, in the same way that "reading" the exterior of one of

these buildings might cause one to mistake it for an office complex, theater, or even college campus, "reading" the inside might cause one the same perplexity.

On the other hand, more traditional churches, regardless of their overall size, tended to have smaller narthexes. For instance, while the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Houston, Texas, seats over 1,800 attendees, it did not have a significantly larger narthex than Our Savior Lutheran Church in Houston, Texas, which seats just over 500. Both had ample space for literature carousels or tables, for guests/members to greet one another, and for any other basic narthex function. However, in contrast to the megachurch narthexes, both of these traditional church narthexes also featured clear religious décor, as well as windows and/or doors with windowpanes designed to behold the main sanctuary. For example, upon entering the Sacred Heart, one's attention might immediately be drawn to the large symbol of the Holy Trinity embedded into the tile work on the floor or the considerable expanse of window paneled walls and doors exposing the nave and all its glory (see Figure 20). Likewise, upon entering Our Savior, one's eyes might be drawn to the statue of the reformer Martin Luther, to the "sword of the Spirit" above the doors to the sanctuary, or even to the large baptismal font seen through the window panels in the sanctuary doors (see Figure 21). By and large, traditional churches sported these more intimate narthexes with more obvious signs of what lay beyond—through both décor and design. What then is the difference in communication?

Bottom-line, the megachurch narthexes, while oftentimes exuding a confident air of success and professionalism, failed to clearly communicate the purpose of their facilities or instill worship-like anticipation; they had no "transparency of purpose." In

contrast, the traditional church narthexes, in varying degrees (some being more "high"

church than others), plainly communicated their religious nature and fostered a foretaste

of what was to come. Additionally, the more intimate size of the traditional church

narthexes suggested a greater sense of community, and, with less space between the

outside doors and the sanctuary doors, encouraged a smooth, swift transition into the

"holiest of holies." Thus, one style of narthex seemed to advertise its church

ambiguously as "multifunctional" and the other clearly as "a house of worship." But

what further dialogue might a church that boasts an outdoor commons or plaza offer?

Commons

Like so many historic churches around the world, Christian churches across the

United States frequently also have some sort of outdoor common area to cater to many of

the same needs a narthex might. From times past to the present, the

> main purpose of a plaza in front of a church is to foster the gathering of
>
> large numbers of people. . . . These are places for people to mingle and
>
> meditate. . . . The church serves its own members and the larger
>
> community when it creates significant public exterior space where people
>
> can be alone or in small groups or sometimes in large assemblies. This
>
> can be an important way of being present to the larger world. (Vosko 73)

Indeed, churches situated in states with more year-round temperate weather often prefer

this venue for pre- and/or post-service socializing, serving refreshments, conducting bake

sales, and the like. Moreover, featuring an outdoor common area for non-liturgical

fellowship allows a church to downsize its narthex and enjoy the versatility of the

outdoors, perhaps also accommodating activities such as picnics, barbeques, and

festivals. A setting like this usually offers at least partial shelter from the elements, with slatted roofs or awnings, low walls or hedges, and/or other features to lessen the effects of wind and sun. Additionally, such an area typically endeavors to provide enough seating to relieve those less able to stand while mingling, as well as adequate room and flow. Thus like a narthex, a designated common area is most functional if it has been carefully mapped out to facilitate the variety of purposes it might serve. However, more than mere functionality, the church commons has the ability to "speak" to those who have ventured into its vicinity—an opportunity to envelope them in a warm welcome, a shared sense of community, a comforting transition into the liturgical world.

Though not always situated by the main entrance, the common area of a church can typically be found adjoining the church proper. Most times this area is a courtyard or patio through which churchgoers might pass by way of the parking lot. It frequently has an unofficial name, such as "Friendship Square" or "Fellowship Plaza" that aptly depicts the nature of its use—socializing. While the size of the property, the climate, and the budget may be limiting, most churches observed for the purposes of this study incorporated some sort of an outdoor gathering space. These spaces varied widely from church to church, with the differences having little to do with a particular category of church. Some were elaborate with beautiful landscaping, plentiful seating, and ample room to accommodate sundry activities. Some were quite simple with little to no landscaping, limited seating, and only adequate room for whatever additional activities might transpire there. Most found a happy medium between the two styles, each church with its own unique take on this outdoor space. For some, that difference was the addition of fountains, statuary, or other novel artwork. Indeed, it was only here that any

category difference between churches was observed; for it was mainly the traditional churches that utilized a religious theme in any fountain, statue, or other piece of art that was incorporated into this space (see Figures 3-4, 10, 22).

Generally, however, no clear categorical differences emerged in the design of a church's common area. Each had equal opportunity to welcome its guests through its aesthetic design and/or user-friendly layout. In fact, the form and function of all exterior components of a church—the grounds, parking facilities, outer structure, narthex, and commons—had the ability to welcome individuals right off the street . . . or chase them away; for they possessed the power to communicate much to the would-be churchgoer. Furthermore, the components of a church's exterior also had the ability to convey its ideology to some extent. It was in this regard that some categorical differences began to appear, with the traditional churches consistently "practicing what they preach" by incorporating architectural details of an inherently religious nature, and the megachurch integrating few, if any, such details and thus demonstrating no "transparency of purpose." So what might these differences communicate to the surrounding community?

In the past, churches have been at the center of communities, even the center of social life. For example, in early American church history, a church might have served the community also as schoolhouse, meeting hall, or lodge. Churches were places where people could share local, personal, or political news. They were places of protection, where individuals might find food, shelter, or asylum. Without doubt, "the church can be viewed as a social network since it attends to familial and communal needs and demands, as well as the spiritual and socioeconomic requirements of its members" (Little 2). It has never been a strictly "inner-directed" institution; rather, it has reliably demonstrated an

"outer-directedness" in service to its community: feeding the hungry, sheltering the

homeless, aiding the injured or destitute, sponsoring community gatherings, educating the

youth, and so much more. Jaeger noted that churches "are de facto community centers.

Neighbors instinctively love an older church building's place on the streetscape. It stands

out and says, 'In the midst of all the change, this is a place of continuity and stability'"

(qtd. in Bierma 37). However, do the two emerging styles of churches carry on this

visual association with community and service, "continuity and stability"? How does the

community "read" the two different types of churches? The traditional churches, with all

the aforementioned familiar architectural markings clearly identifying them as indeed

churches, are the embodiments of "continuity and stability" and can subsequently hold

claim to their time-honored connotation to community and service. Additionally, the

very fact that they are unique buildings, set apart from the everyday, is part of what

makes them special, part of their appeal. On the other hand, the megachurches and

churches following their design concept are "new and trendy" places for worship, not

ones of "continuity and stability." They do not stand out as unique or special; they tend

to look like theaters, shopping centers, business parks, or malls and so are not even

clearly identifiable as churches, let alone organizations readily associated with the

community and service of historical churches. So what do they communicate, if not

community and service, "continuity and stability"? An interesting query to be sure, as

well as further witness to the rhetorical impact that a church exterior wields over

individuals—and one that certainly needs to be explicated.

However, before delving too deeply into the analysis and findings of a church

exterior's visual rhetoric, an examination of a church interior's visual rhetoric must also

be included. For if the exterior of a church "passes the test" of interested passersby, and they make it to the sanctuary entrance, what will they feel once they cross that threshold? What will they experience via what they see? What visual messages await them? The next two chapters will address these questions and more; the first will focus on the emotive factors within the church sanctuary and the second, the liturgical factors.
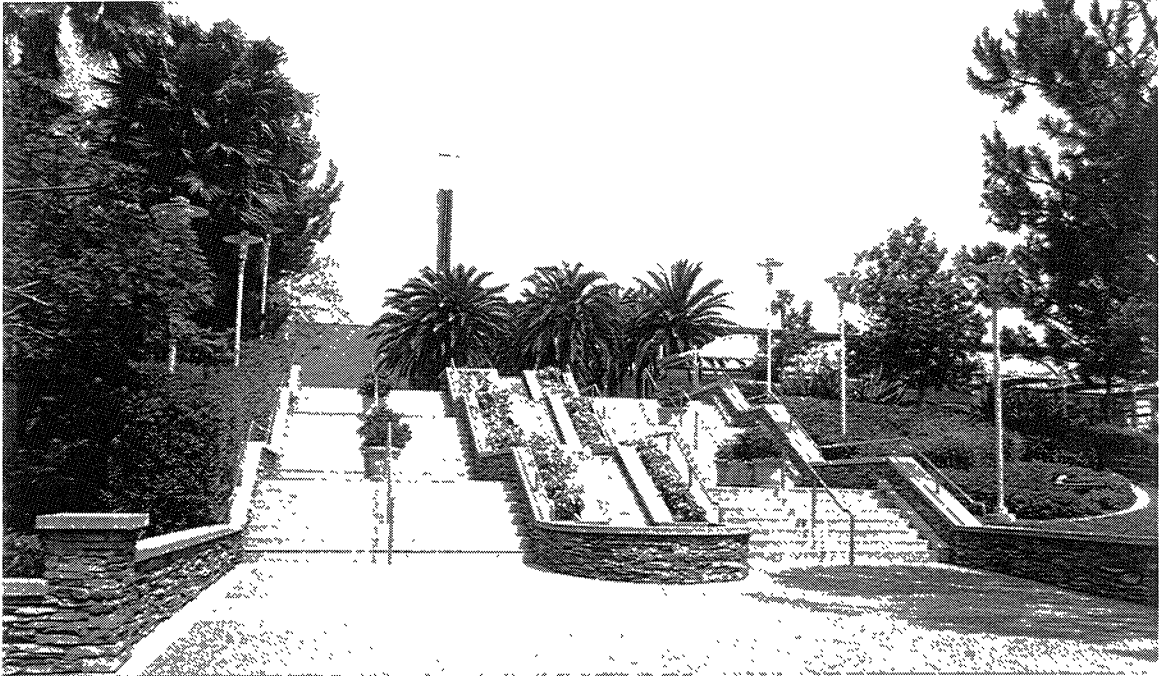
Figure 1. Landscaping of walkway up to Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, CA.
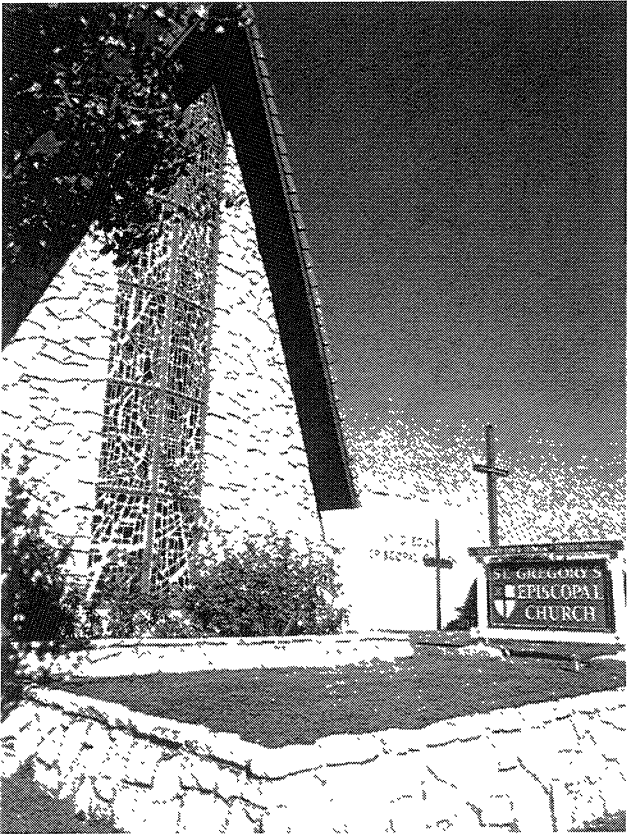
Figure 2. Landscaping of street-side face of St. Gregory's Episcopal Church, Long Beach, CA.

Figure 3. Landscaping of entrance to Christ the King Lutheran Church, Redlands, CA.

Figure 4. Landscaping of entrance to Our Savior Lutheran Church, Houston, TX.

Figure 5. One of several expansive parking lots at Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, CA.

Figure 6. The street-side parking lot at Cottonwood Church, Los Alamitos, CA.
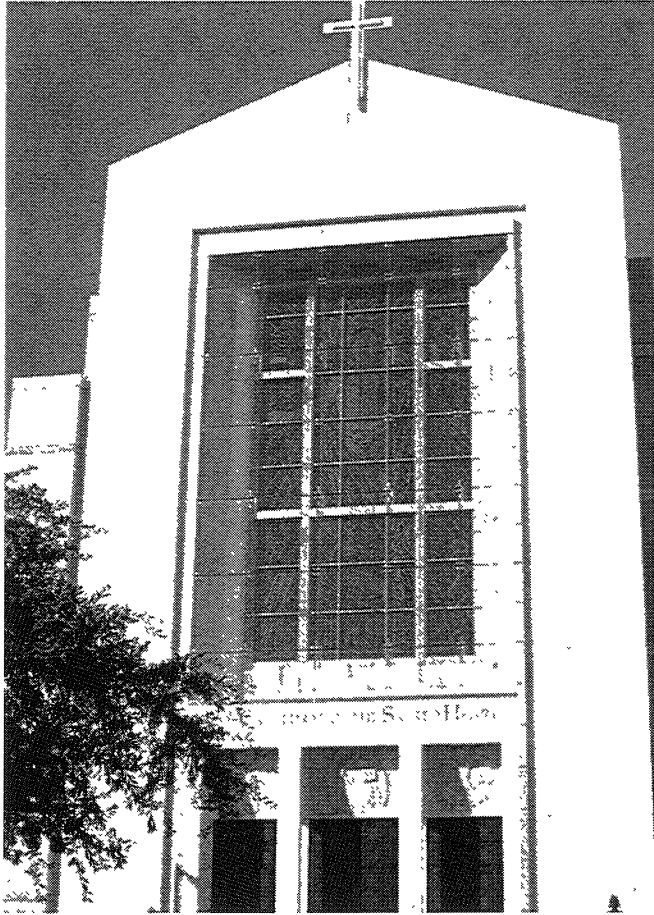
Figure 7. Front entrance to the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Houston, TX.

Figure 8. St. Innocent Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Anchorage, AK.

Figure 9. St. Paul Lutheran Church, Austin, TX.

Figure 10. St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church, The Woodlands, TX.

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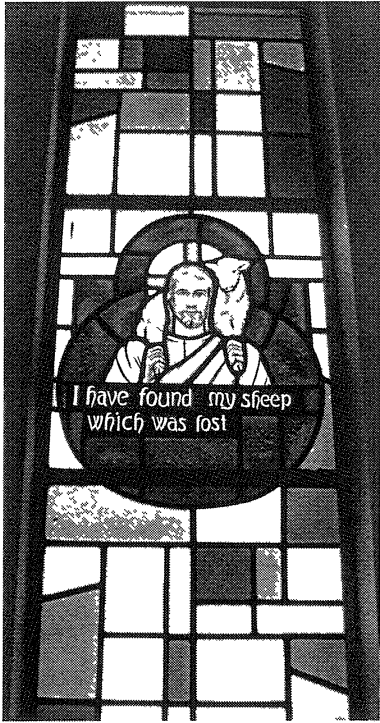
Figure 11. The Good Shepherd stained glass at Shepherd of the City, Fort Wayne, IN.
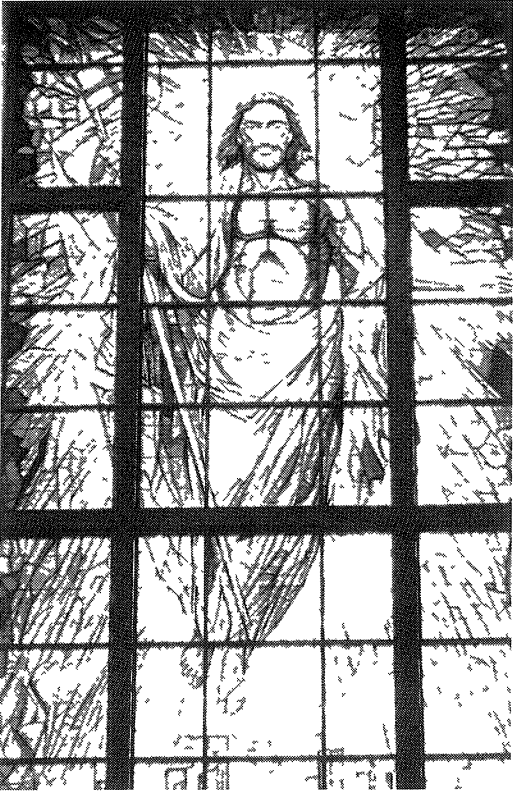
Figure 12. The Ascending Savior stained glass at the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Houston, TX.
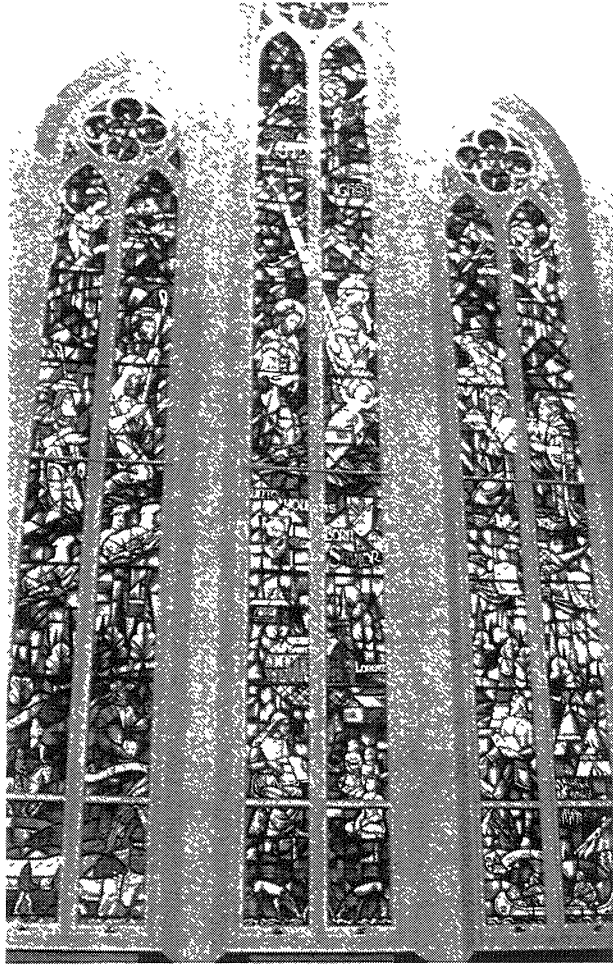
Figure 13. St. Lorenz stained glass at St. Lorenz Lutheran Church, Frankenmuth, MI.

Figure 14. Cottonwood Church, Los Alamitos, CA.

Figure 15. Sea Coast Grace Church, Cypress, CA.

Figure 16. Woodlands Church, The Woodlands, TX.
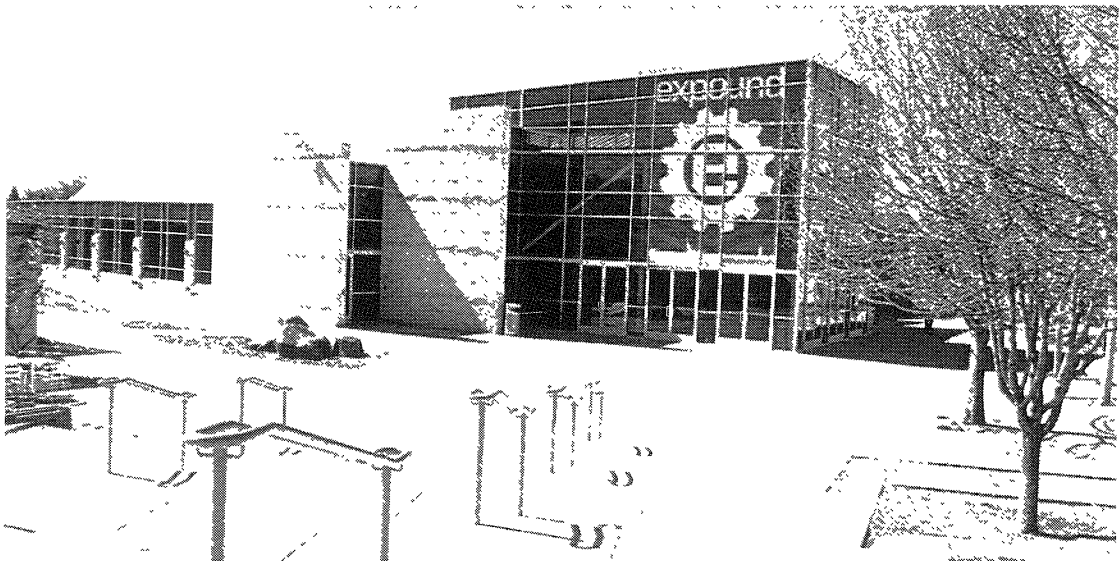
Figure 17. Calvary of Albuquerque, Albuquerque, NM.

Figure 18. Coffee shop inside Sea Coast Grace Church, Cypress, CA.

Figure 19. Bank of escalators in Lakewood Church, Houston, TX.

Figure 20. Holy Trinity tile work at the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Houston, TX.

Figure 21. Martin Luther statue at Our Savior Lutheran Church, Houston, TX. Also, the Sword of the Spirit above the doors to the sanctuary.
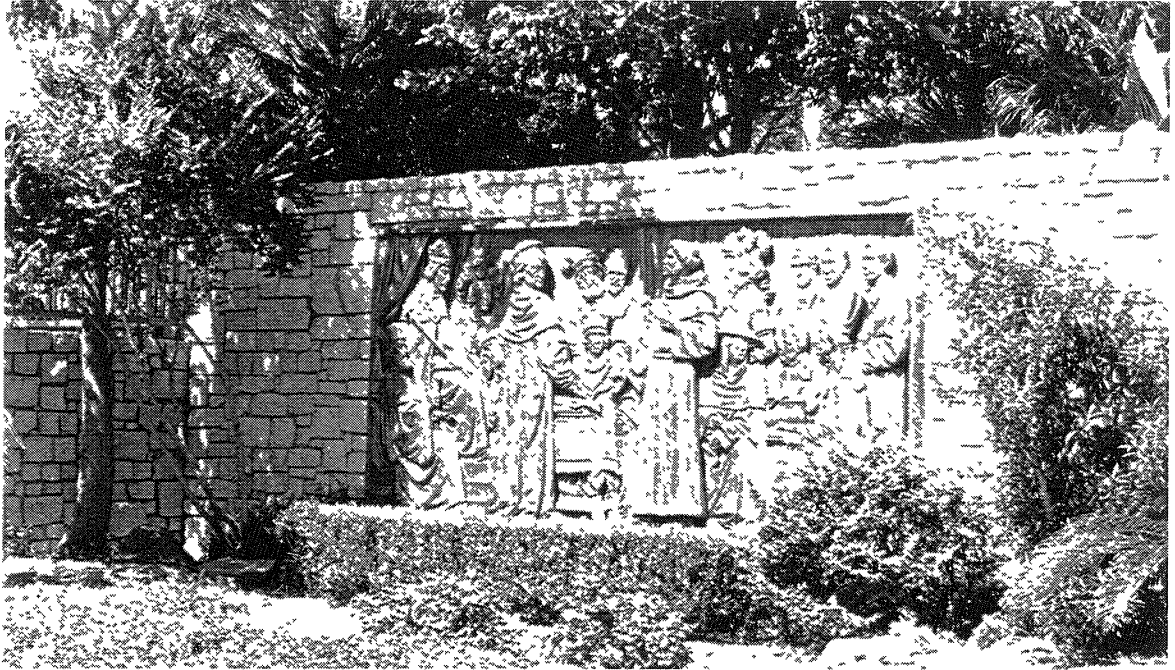
Figure 22. Reformation monument at Our Savior Lutheran Church, Houston, TX.

CHAPTER 3

THE INTERIOR: EMOTIVE FACTORS

A good film or play has the power to evoke strong emotions in an audience

through a number of devices, including simple, often subtle visual cues. For example, if

the goal is to instill a sense of fear or foreboding, stage lighting may become ever

dimmer, casting mysterious shadows about and allowing a gloom to descend on the

scene. If a sense of patriotism is the goal, the colors of the national flag might be

incorporated in the actors' apparel and/or in the stage design. If the goal is to create a

feeling of awe or wonder, monolithic elements might be imposed on a scene, like massive

mountains, towering trees, or soaring skyscrapers. These elements—light, color, and

scale—are but a few of the means by which the emotions of an audience might be

directed. Symbols likewise can be used to help set a particular mood or feeling. For

example, fear might equally be evoked by symbols associated with pain, war, or death.

Patriotism could be stirred by national icons, and a sense of awe or wonder might be

kindled by that which is revered. Such strategies to rouse emotions are not limited to the

entertainment industry; numerous other businesses, establishments, and institutions also

have the ability to influence the senses, to set the stage for their own design, including

churches. For "emotive factors play a very important role in arousing the feelings often

associated with personal devotions" (White, *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture*

29).

One example of a church wielding power over the senses is an account by

Professor Karl Squitier of California State University, Long Beach. The professor was

teaching a study abroad program in Rome and brought his students to St. Peter's Basilica,

a renowned Catholic cathedral. Upon entering the building, one of his students found

himself so overwhelmed at what he saw, and subsequently felt, that he became virtually

immobile. Beckoned by his distraught student, Squitier questioned the young man as to

his wellbeing, to which the student replied that he could not move from the sheer

enormity of what he his eyes beheld (Squitier). Another example of a church evoking

strong emotion in an individual is Dr. Craig Smith's account of a similar occurrence in

Rome. While teaching in Italy, he and a junior colleague took excursions to visit local

churches. Smith's colleague was

> often astounded at the beauty and sublime nature of the cathedrals. But
>
> when [he] walked into San Giovanni, with its huge cross-like design and
>
> large statues of the apostles lining the open main area, his mouth opened
>
> and his eyes got very wide. [He] moved slowly toward the altar area and
>
> then sat down. He just stared at the ceiling and the altar for nearly thirty
>
> minutes. (Smith, "Questions")

Both of these young men were moved beyond expression, and it was that which they

beheld in a church that stimulated such profound emotion. How can a church have such

power? What are the elements inside of a church that might so influence people's

emotions? What end goal might these elements serve?

As has been established in previous chapters, the visual has great influence on

how individuals perceive the world around them—in this case, a church and its nonverbal

message to its congregants. Emotive factors in a church, such as lighting, color, scale, texture, and artwork, have the ability to reflect, reinforce, and even teach theology, as well as set a distinct mood. Thus, the manner in which a church interior is styled will indeed communicate something to its inhabitants—but what? What ideology is represented by the interior of a church, whether simple, elaborate, or somewhere in-between? What mood is set by what is seen? This chapter will take a look at how some of the churches selected for this analysis implemented various elements frequently associated with a church's interior, including lighting, spatial dynamics, art, stained glass, and, more newly on the scene, modern technology. Additionally, an account of what these elements commonly communicate and what possible mood might be established by their incorporation will be given.

Lighting

Numerous authors throughout the books of the Bible used the concept of light in their texts to signify much more than simple physical illumination; they used it to teach moral and spiritual illumination. The Biblical use of light is often equated to concepts such as God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, life, goodness, truth, seeing clearly, and understanding. For example, in John's Gospel, the words of Jesus are recounted, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, John 3.12). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said to those who followed His teachings, "You are the light of the world. . . . let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Matthew 5.14-16). In a psalm to the Lord, it is written, "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. . . . the unfolding of Your

words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Psalm 119.105, 130). In 1 John it is taught that "God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, 1 John 1.5). These and other similar passages demonstrate the scope of how light is used through Biblical text. Many churches have accordingly, and quite commonly, sought to incorporate the use of lighting to do more than illuminate their interior; they have endeavored to communicate something more— something along moral and spiritual lines. In so doing, they have attempted to reach the sublime:

> In his Republic, Plato equated lightness with goodness, saying that sunlight is "not only the author of visibility in all visible things but of generation and nourishment and growth." For his Neo-Platonic followers, this reference raised light to the status of a transcendental entity. They celebrated light and luminosity as an expression of the creativity of God and, in consequence, as a measure of the beauty of his creations. (Ball 240)

Thus, incorporating creative light elements into the church sanctuary can generate greater depths of meaning and feeling. For example,

> . . . the perception of morning light shining through sanctuary windows onto an altar "carries with strong immediacy a sense of enlightenment and blessing"—it works as a valid symbol—precisely because morning sunlight falling through windows when shades are raised is spontaneously "received as a gift of life." (Kieckhefer 136-137)

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Along these lines, one of the most prevalent ways in which light was used in the churches observed for this study was by directing attention to specific areas or features. In the more traditional churches, the altar area was predominantly the main focus. Whether artificial or natural, most altars were bathed in light, drawing attention to the place from which the Lord's Supper is distributed. For example, above the altar at Shepherd of the City, Fort Wayne, Indiana, a bright light was cast over the altar as if from heaven above, with additional recessed lights spotlighting the figure of Christ and the Last Supper tableau (see Figure 23). Most traditional churches similarly spotlighted the pulpit, directing attention to where the Word of God is preached. An illustration of this was in Our Savior Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas, where the pulpit was lit both by a backdrop of stained glass windows and recessed lighting (see Figure 24). Also highlighted in many of these same churches were either crosses or crucifixes, focusing attention on the instrument by which salvation was won. For example, St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church, The Woodlands, Texas, had a life-sized crucifix suspended from the ceiling, illuminated by two flanking chandeliers and a large, circular stained glass window behind it (see Figure 25). Some of the traditional churches even illuminated the baptismal font, pointing attention to the means by which one is born again of water and the Spirit (Concordia Self-Study Bible, John 3.5). A case in point was Kramer Chapel, Fort Wayne, Indiana, where illuminated ceiling art depicting a descending dove shone light upon the baptismal font directly below (see Figure 26). While a few of these churches featured other "light-enhanced" elements as well, the common line of communication was evident—the imminence of God through Word and Sacrament.

Not only was the *presence* of light used in traditional churches to visually stimulate congregants but the *absence* of light. For while many of these churches were designed with an abundance of windows and were thus rich in natural light throughout, others were built with a modicum of windows and/or with a configuration that limited how and where light shone through to the interior. Oftentimes, this design left small pockets of the interior shrouded in shadows, with any artificial light used accentuating the effect, isolating the unlit areas and creating an aura of mystery and/or somberness. These areas were usually sites for meditation, private confession, or other private acts of devotion. Many times, churches like St. Paul Lutheran Church, Austin, Texas, had vaulted ceilings featuring stained glass windows high above the congregants, which caused great light to "hover" in the rafters over the less illumined nave, creating a sense of "heaven and earth." Indeed, "to draw men and women into contemplation of [the] divine light so that it might enter and illuminate their hearts, [luminosity] had to be shown radiating into gloom" (Ball 239-240). Other times, it was shadow play that generated visual inspiration, like that at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Long Beach, California, where light on the arches formed additional shadow arches on the walls, enhancing and drawing attention to the ark-like design of the building where God shelters His people. This "absence" of light, or at least subtle contrast between light and dark, as evidenced by the preceding examples, was yet another tool that these traditional churches implemented to communicate a particular ideology—the transcendence of God.

On the other hand, megachurches, and those patterning themselves along the same lines, had fewer "statements" made through the use of light. One of the reasons for this was the scarcity of permanent elements to spotlight. Whether original construction or

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remodeled, most of these newer style of churches were designed to be multifunctional and thus "transitional" with few fixed features. There were no obvious altar areas, rather stages that might or might not have any sort of table present. In most cases, there were no fixed podiums, let alone designated pulpits set apart for preaching. Additionally, many of these churches had no universal religious symbols present at all: no crosses or crucifixes, no statuary, no paintings, no carvings, et cetera. A case in point was Calvary of Albuquerque, which did feature a banner prominently on its stage but *not* with a design that would readily be associated with the Christian faith, rather one that might only speak to those already actively engaged in the society of this particular church (see Figure 27). Those churches that did incorporate some sort of standard Christian symbol often relegated it "offstage." For example, while there was a cross at Woodlands Church, The Woodlands, Texas, it was on casters and pushed about as needed for whatever event was at hand—thus not a prominent feature spotlighted with any set light source (see Figure 28). Furthermore, none of the megachurches were observed to possess a baptismal font of any sort. Only churches abandoning their traditional roots to emulate the megachurch phenomenon retained this element in their remodeling or reconfiguration; yet none overtly emphasized it with lighting effects.

However, while not using light in the same manner as more traditional churches, lighting elements were certainly abundant in the megachurches and their imitators. In fact, these churches had quite complex lighting systems and many times included high-tech control booths to operate them (see Figures 28-30). Similar to theater or concert equipment, these systems allow for a multitude of stage effects, including front lighting, back lighting, washing the stage in light, and color variations. Also in keeping with a

theater or concert hall, the interior of the facilities where the services are held were typically void of windows or had room darkening apparatus—neither of which allowed natural light to participate in the visual conversation. Any lighting used in these churches was almost exclusively concentrated on the stage, which by far and large featured band equipment: drums, keyboards, music stands, and the like (see Figures 27-31). Between the elaborate lighting equipment and the focus on a stage populated with musical instruments, these churches conveyed more of a recreational mood than a worshipful one.[1] Moreover, while the importance of music was certainly communicated to the onlooker, no real ideology was revealed—unless it was to say that music equals worship.

The preceding account presented two very different approaches at incorporating light into church sanctuaries, two very different lines of communication. The more traditional churches seemed constant in their subtle integration of God-given and man-made light, utilizing it to underpin God's duality—His immanent nature and His transcendent nature. These churches incorporated light

> —ambient, accent and architectural—to create a space that is both
>
> utilitarian and beautiful, [adhering to the idea that] highlighting the
>
> architecture to underscore the volume of space, creating drama through
>
> down-lighting and dimming, and using the fixtures as decorative elements
>
> in themselves are critical to the overall effect of an interior which appeals
>
> to our sense of sight. (Potente and Zersen 36)

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[1] This mood would be what the individual who entered the worship center might discern *before* the service commenced; how the extensive lighting in these churches might influence the individual *during* the course of the service is outside the scope of this thesis. For this thesis does not endeavor to tackle the rhetoric of the actual church services.

In contrast, the more contemporary churches seemed disinterested in the subtle ways in which light might be used to teach and/or to inspire and instead went all out with high-tech lighting and stage design, communicating neither a substantive visual message nor creating a mood particularly contemplative of God's nature. Yet lighting is but one of many ways to nonverbally communicate. So how might the two different styles of churches use other elements to speak to their congregants?

<div align="center">Spatial Dynamics</div>

Another architectural element that has power to evoke response is space itself—how it is designed, how it is used, and of what it is composed. "Space is an extension of the [church architectural] plan with an important consideration: the inclusion of a third dimension that provides a 'setting,' a dramatic and necessary ambience for the emotional cultivation and harvest of faith" (Hayes 103). Furthermore,

> buildings introduce themselves by their sheer physical presence. Their size and scale, materials used, and sense of proportion and unity can draw our attention, bore us, or even repel us. Once past the initial "introduction," interesting buildings invite us to engage in a meaningful "conversation," holding out the promise of richer experiences embedded in their symbols and spaces. (Williams 127)

Thus, the structural elements themselves can be part of an individual's experience upon entering a church. Are there vaulted ceilings, domes, or arches soaring above? Are there strategic divisions of space—architectural cavities created by columns, cupolas, or other components? Are the structural elements more utilitarian or more ornamental? Are the materials used synthetic or natural? Combined, these details have power to convey a

message and/or stimulate a distinct frame of mind. The following will venture to generalize the potentially "meaningful conversations" created by such architectural details as offered by the two types of churches examined in this thesis.

For the most part, both designs of churches, the more traditional and the megachurch, had a sense of verticality; large, airy spaces above the congregants were the norm. However, that is where the similarity ceased. The design employed in the architecture of the traditional churches had something definite to proclaim via the heights they encompassed. These "churches [were] vertical spaces, soaring heights reaching toward Heaven, of transcendence, bringing the heavenly Jerusalem down to the people on earth" (Klemsz 9). For example, the design of these spaces repeatedly used structural devices for poignancy not just practicality. One way this was made evident was by the manner in which these churches achieved their verticality. Many of the traditional churches were constructed in a triangular design, which is not only a means to compel one's eyes heavenward but also a means to introduce the subtle symbolism of the church, in this case the triangle symbolizing the three divine persons of the One True God (see Figures 2 and 32). Other churches used arches to support their great height—some quite simple, some quite elaborate—to again draw attention heavenward and to the great glory of God (see Figures 33 and 34). These, too, might be seen to serve a symbolic purpose, with the vaulting effect creating an image where one might see "himself travelling through the world in a ship, captained by St. Peter, [or] as Noah travelled over the flood in his ark" (Rykwert 8). Still other churches made use of domes to attain verticality and remind their congregants of the expansiveness of the heavens, the symbolism of the celestial (see Figures 35 and 36). Additionally, the materials used for the structure of

these churches were predominately natural elements, like stone, wood, or marble—gifts

of creation used to build and adorn a sanctuary to worship the Creator. As a result, these

edifices had capacity to "call to mind the Great Architect . . . 'works of nature [to] remind

us of the God of nature'" (Kieckhefer 19).

Conversely, the megachurches and many of those patterning themselves in their

likeness did not impart such messages to their masses. While the expanse of space above

congregants' heads was often equal and sometimes greater than traditional churches, it

was generally used for the practicality of seating, sound, and stage effect, rather than

subtle symbolism. In other words, there were not commonly architectural devices

incorporated to foster potentially "meaningful conversations." In fact, with acoustic

ceiling tiles being the norm and extensive lighting equipment hanging in the rafters, the

effect was quite utilitarian and not communicative of any particular worshipful meaning

or mood (see Figures 27-31). Further compounding this impression were the synthetic

materials more often than not used in the construction of these churches' vast spaces,

concrete being amongst the foremost used. Consequently, these edifices lent more focus

on the ingenuity of man and his accomplishments than the grace of God and His

accomplishments.

Although verticality was a common spatial denominator in both styles of

churches (though utilized altogether differently), the concept of architectural cavities was

only significantly seen in the traditional churches.[2] Most of these churches had niches of

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[2] The most notable exception to this finding were churches that had attempted to
refurbish and/or remodel their existing, more traditional sanctuaries to pattern themselves
after the basic theater style of the megachurch. In these cases, they seemed to have
worked within the confines of the basic structure of their buildings to avoid major

space architecturally carved out by one means or another, for one purpose or another.

For example, many of the churches had such cavities to set apart the chancel. Lutheran

Memorial Church, Houston, Texas, achieved this effect through a simple geometrical

ceiling design over the altar, which was fashioned of a simple, natural material—wood

(see Figure 37). On a more elaborate scale, the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in

Houston, Texas, crafted a niche for its chancel with a concave back wall framed by a

lofty arch and topped with a domed skylight, which was fashioned of a more ornate,

natural material—marble (see Figures 34 and 36). In addition to highlighting the chancel

area, the latter church exemplified other uses of architectural cavities. For within the

cavity that set apart the chancel of this cathedral were additional niches, architectural

cavities within architectural cavities. The most prominent cavity was an elevated recess

framed by a darker marble with a backdrop of gold to accentuate a life-size crucifix (see

Figures 34 and 38). The lesser cavities, framed by arches of the same dark marble, were

alcoves to seat the sundry presbyters (see Figures 34 and 38). Another example of using

architectural cavities to highlight specific areas of use or focus was at St. Paul Lutheran

Church, Austin, Texas, where a baptismal font was housed in a side bay adjacent to the

chancel (see Figure 39). Still other churches' cavities were created by columns,

balustrades, wall niches and recesses—sometimes simply to divide walkways from

gathering spaces, other times to feature religious icons, such as the Stations of the Cross,

statuary, or stained glass windows, and still other times to create distinct areas intended

for special purposes, like meditation, private confession, or other private acts of devotion.

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reconstruction, neither eradicating existing architectural cavities nor particularly utilizing
them for any great effect.

In addition to verticality and architectural cavities, another spatial factor that impacts a church building's potential line of communication and/or capacity to create a mood is interior flow—how the shape of the building and the placement of furnishings direct congregants' focus. For

> when architecture is interpreted as forms which swell, press, push out, etc.—all motion phenomena—it is really an attempt to show how the spectator re-creates the building masses through the visual process. The observer is given a great deal to think about. . . . It is pure external drama, a play of architectural forms. (Rasmussen 71)

Here, too, the two types of churches differed notably. Whether longitudinal, semi-circular, cruciform, or some other layout, the more traditional churches' architectural plan directed flow to a single point of focus: "Spatially, almost all churches were built so that focus would be upon the altar, the center of God's dwelling and work with His people" (Bruggink 52). There was a clear design flow that culminated at the altar, the arrangement of sundry structural features leading the way: columns, floor pattern, pew arrangement, pew torches, ceiling design, and more. There was a sense of anticipation created by this processional space:

> It allows and even invites clergy and laity to pass from one end of the building to the other at different moments of the mass. The movement is governed chiefly by the altar at the far end of the nave, which stands as the chief visual focus in the church and exercises what can be imagined as a kind of magnetic attraction, drawing the worshipper forward. (Kieckhefer 23-24)

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Entering these churches was akin to commencing upon a spiritual journey, "one of procession and return, or of proclamation and response, or of gathering in community and returning to the world outside" (Kieckhefer 21). Many times this "journey" was initiated by the waters of Holy Baptism, referring to the numerous traditional churches that were observed to have their baptismal fonts situated in the midst of the processional space, reminding all that it is through Holy Baptism that one enters the church, the spiritual communion of Christ (see Figures 23, 34, 38, and 40-42). Frequently, this "procession" was amidst walls adorned with the Stations of the Cross, Biblical characters and/or narratives depicted in stained glass or statuary, or other iconography to teach and/or reinforce the doctrine of the church (see Figures 43-44). This processional path consistently ascended up a few steps to reach the chancel—a "rising" as it were to enter the holy of holies—with a prominent place for the preaching of the Word situated within, where the Good News of Christ's salvation might be proclaimed (see Figures 54-55). This then led to the culmination of the processional "journey"—the Eucharistic table, the Sacrament of the Altar, where Christ's body and blood are given for the remission of sins (see Figures 23, 32, 37, 42, 45). Throughout this spiritual journey, the processional space fostered a connection between Word and Sacrament, visually demonstrating how the liturgical acts are linked. As a result, this processional space, along with the elements used to furnish the space, helped the central plan of these churches welcome the congregants with a warm embrace, visually leading them to the apex of Christ's Gospel gifts, won for them in His ministry and mission to save.

On the other hand, while the megachurches and their imitators also had a design flow that led to a single point of focus, that focus, almost without exception, was not an

altar but a stage, a stage bereft of the liturgical components most often associated with a church. Moreover, the manner in which the directional flow was created was significantly different than in traditional churches. To begin with, the architectural plan for these churches was predominantly auditorium or theater style, oftentimes with stadium seating, balconies, and occasionally even boxes (see Figures 27-28, 30, and 46-47). Rather than something new to church architecture, this approach mirrors the "radical-plan amphitheatre" of the 1880s, introduced by revivalist Charles Grandison Finney in 1832 when he converted the Chatham Theater in New York City into a Presbyterian church able to cater to thousands—perhaps marking the moment in time when church first became "significantly influenced by theatre space" (Kilde 20). Apparently not concerned with the short-lived success of this first attempt at theater-styled churches, a new wave of spiritual entrepreneurs have either commissioned new buildings or converted old buildings (grocery stores, theaters, sports arenas, et cetera) to accommodate their particular vision for worship. In fact, with a fundamental objective to entertain large numbers, megachurches tend to be rather cavernous edifices—to the point where some of the largest traditional churches are utterly dwarfed. This enormous amount of space was observed to distance many of the congregants from the center of worship activity and make significant interaction with fellow congregants an insurmountable undertaking—both of which create division more than unity or fellowship. Additionally, while the graduated floor plan, the seating configuration, and the lighting focus certainly directed attention to one focal point—a stage, there was no sense of procession like that in the traditional churches, which meant that certain "physical needs" were not met:

After all, we are a restless pilgrim people. Not only do we move about to

receive communion, but weddings, funerals, baptisms, offertory and other

processions are built about movement. Perhaps the most significant single

act of all worship is that of Christians assembling, coming together,

meeting, gathering, congregating to "discern the body" of the Lord.

(White, "Liturgy and the Language of Space" 63)

Indeed, many of the megachurches had no space designated for such movement, such

common congregational ceremonies. They were also by far and large bereft of any of the

aforementioned furnishings or architectural detail that direct congregants' focus toward a

climatic point.[3] Absent were the ideological lessons composed in stained glass, statuary,

carvings, and furnishings. Missing were the liturgical "centers" for the distribution of

Christ's gifts. Instead, all eyes were mechanically, versus artistically, pointed toward a

multifunctional stage, upon which might be situated a podium, drums and guitars, or

other theatrical props, depending on the occasion, but none with any "transparency of

purpose." So what was communicated by the space within these mammoth edifices—

what ideology was promoted, what emotions evoked?

Unquestionably, one cannot confront such sheer size without some emotion;

however, the space in the megachurch style of architecture falls short of *necessarily*

equating the awe and anticipatory feelings one might experience with anything

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[3] Again, the most notable exception to this finding were churches that had
attempted to refurbish and/or remodel their existing, more traditional sanctuaries to
pattern themselves after the basic theater style of the megachurch. In these instances,
there were still some remnants of architectural detail that once might have served as part
of the "processional" space leading to the altar— in most cases, an altar either
downplayed or removed altogether in the refurbish/remodel project.

particularly religious or worshipful. Thus, the megachurches used neither their verticality nor their interior flow to any great effect, emotionally or ideologically—one might as well be entering an impressive theater or stadium, with any awe or anticipation kindled being geared more toward the expectation of being entertained than the expectation of being in the very presence of Almighty God to receive His Word and Sacrament. In contrast, the traditional churches used both verticality and interior flow, as well as the addition of architectural cavities, to teach/reinforce Biblical truths, to illustrate the spiritual journey, and to create a reverent atmosphere—all helping to prepare congregants for worship. Thus a pattern of divergence has become further evident—two very different styles of churches, two very different approaches to using space as a visual tutor or dramatist. So if the megachurch and traditional church differ so vastly with light and spatial factors, how might artistic factors fit into the equation?

Art

Art can encompass a whole host of mediums, genres, tastes, and flairs. It has the ability to stimulate the senses, rouse the emotions, and challenge the intellect. How then is it used in the church? Grouch analogized art in the church to "the *amuse-bouche* or *amuse-gueule*, the surprising little tasty snack brought out before the first course is served. It is designed to whet your appetite, remind you why you came, and awaken your senses and your mind, preparing you for the amazing food that is to come" (30). Accordingly, art can be an integral part of the worship experience: setting the stage, engaging multiple senses, reinforcing knowledge, and creating a hunger for Word and Sacrament. So how do the two different styles of churches employ this particular factor of visual communication?

The traditional churches selected for this study were all observed to have incorporated at least some amount of art in their sanctuaries. For example, all of the churches had either a cross or crucifix prominently positioned above the altar (see Figures 25, 32, 37-38, 40, 45). Whether suspended in air or affixed to a wall, the high placement created the sense that the congregants were gathered at the foot of the cross, the very foot of Christ. The crosses, bare of Christ's body, were symbols bringing to mind that it was upon a cross that the sins of the world were borne away. Even more poignantly, the crucifixes, bearing Christ's corpus, reminded all *who* it was that bore the sins of the world—God incarnate, humbling Himself unto death on a cross for all humankind. Furthermore, the crucifixes, with the realistic depiction of the suffering Christ, had the ability to impress upon the congregants the dreadful truth of death by crucifixion and thus the fathomless love that God's Son showed in His willingness to pay such an incredible price for the salvation of all. Intensifying this impression, some of the crucifixes were crafted so that the crossbar bowed down, symbolizing the weight of human sin upon the broken body of Christ. Whether suspended or mounted, simple or ornate, wood or metal, the cross or crucifix above the altar was certainly the most prominent; however, various crosses were also present throughout the churches' interior: embroidered on altar paraments and clergy vestments, carved in furnishings, framed in stained glass, and featured in the Stations of the Cross—all representing and memorializing Christ's death.

Another common artistic influence in the traditional churches was stained glass. Nearly all of these churches incorporated stained glass windows: most featuring them throughout the entire sanctuary, others utilizing them as accent features. More often than

not, stained glass windows were noted to be part of the "processional space" discussed in the preceding section. For example, depicted in large stained glass windows on either side of the "processional space," one church featured the twelve apostles, another key Biblical narratives of Christ's life, and still another aspects of the Christian life (see Figures 48-49). Those that employed stained glass as an accent feature usually did so in a big way. For example, the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Houston, Texas, showcased a forty-foot-tall stained glass window of the resurrected Christ above the choir loft, with the image of the Savoir looking in at His flock, as well as looking out at Houston and the entire world beyond (see Figure 50). Likewise, Our Savior Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas, installed eight large, oval windows around its octagonal structure, each depicting one of the Messianic titles of Christ from the Revelation of St. John, such as Christ the Alpha, Christ the Omega, the Lamb Who Was Slain, and the Root of David. Where no two churches were the same, with their stained glass window themes, styles, and arrangements varying little or greatly, one strong common denominator was readily apparent—the Gospel was in the windows. Here was an artistic component that "spoke" to the people; for when "God given light penetrated the vivid colors of the glass, [what was] proclaimed [was] the message of salvation from the creation to the cross, from the sin of humanity to the grace of Christ's death and resurrection" (*The Gospel in Stained Glass* 2).

In addition to the apparent universal use of crosses and stained glass, nearly all of the traditional churches used a variety of other artistic mediums to "converse" with their congregants as well. For example, some used a mosaic medium, like Trinity Lutheran Church, Whittier, California, which had a mosaic rendering of Golgotha (the hill upon

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which Christ was crucified) as backdrop to the altar cross, adding context and deeper

meaning to the otherwise lone cross (see Figure 45). Similarly, St. Paul Lutheran

Church, Austin, Texas, had a mosaic depiction of the Spirit descending in the image of a

dove as backdrop in a baptismal alcove—a reminder of Christ's own baptism and the new

life the baptized have in Him (see Figure 39). Some used paintings, whether hanging art

or murals, as part of their lessons of faith. For example, Kramer Chapel, Fort Wayne,

Indiana, had painted panels hung at the rear of the sanctuary, depicting Biblical narratives

(see Figure 51). Whereas, St. Lorenz Lutheran Church, Frankenmuth, Michigan, had

both a painted rendition of Christ's crucifixion mounted within an elaborate altar, with a

massive mural of Christ's ascension in the half dome above the altar—visually sharing

the story of Christ's death and resurrection. Still others used statues or carvings to

enlighten their congregants and create a reverent environment. For example, many

churches, especially the Roman Catholic, had the Stations of the Cross displayed

throughout the sanctuary, most often via carvings or statuary (see Figures 52-53). Not

only were specific art forms used throughout the traditional churches for symbolic,

instructional, or emotional purposes but simply for beauty. Liturgical furnishings, pews,

columns, arches, and other features within these churches were frequently embellished

with artistic flair—painted or carved images, scrollwork, detailed moldings, and the

like—paying further homage to the God of the universe and aiding in a transcendental

process, passage from the ordinary to the extraordinary.

However, the megachurches and their imitators were virtually the antithesis of the

aforementioned practice of using art in the church to teach, emote, or symbolize theology.

Bare were their walls of paintings, mosaics, carvings, or statuary. Seldom were there

windows, let alone stained glass. Few and far between were even the basic Christian symbols of cross or crucifix. For the most part, the megachurch was bereft of any significant architectural adornment or art. While this dearth was not as absolute in the churches that had newly "converted" to the megachurch paradigm via refurbishing and/or remodeling their previously more traditional sanctuaries, it was evident that much of their prior adornment or art had been downplayed or removed altogether. Some of the individual megachurches did have flowers, sets and props, seasonal banners, or the like to relieve the austerity of their stages but nothing that seemed to promulgate any sort of patent theological ideology. For example, Joel Osteen's church in Houston, Texas, had rock and plant terraces on either side of the stage, with a sizeable, perpetually revolving globe in the rear center—visually interesting perhaps but not indicative or exclusive to the basic tenants of the Christian faith (see Figure 30). Similarly, Calvary of Albuquerque, New Mexico, had a cityscape backdrop on the stage, with the word "Expound" prominently displayed in front of it—visual relief of the otherwise plain space perhaps but not witness to the mysteries of God (see Figure 27). Indeed, the goal of the megachurches and their imitators seemed to be complete minimalism, keeping the stage in "flux" to accommodate whatever theatrical, musical, or rhetorical performance might be enacted and to enjoy whatever mood, trend, or philosophy might be in vogue.

Thus on yet another front, the traditional church and megachurch deeply differed. The traditional churches strove to share the message of the Bible and give glory to God nonverbally through art and artistic embellishments, just as they had through lighting and spatial dynamics. Theirs was a visual journey to teach and inspire the congregants of the unchanging mysteries of God. They understood that

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. . . there are symbolic overtones, ornaments, that can enrich the essential

mission of a given church and that need to be added in order to advance its

stature from the prosaic to the poetic. . . . Such elements as sculpture,

painting, windows, fabrics, and the like—all of which contribute grace and

beauty to the interior . . . combine to advocate the meaning of the church

itself. (Hayes 120)

On the other hand, the megachurches and their imitators used little, if any, art or artistic

embellishments for decoration, let alone to teach or inspire the congregants of anything

particular. Yet their apparent disinterest in expressing Christian ideology, or instilling a

sense of the sacred, through the skillful incorporation of lighting, spatial dynamics, and

art was in itself a lesson. Whether intentional or not, it conveyed a certain amount of

disdain for such things, as if such things (and perhaps even what they expressed) were

unimportant, behind the times, or transient. At the very least, these churches clearly

communicated that they were different, unique, and certainly not the church of "old."

This was especially made manifest through the extensive incorporation of the final

emotive factor under critique, modern technology.

<p align="center">Modern Technology</p>

One might not immediately think of technology as emotive, but like all the

aforementioned factors, lighting, spatial dynamics, and art, technology can also make a

statement and stimulate a response. Lighting techniques, video projection, sound effects,

and social media can all unquestionably direct and even manipulate thoughts and

feelings; however, the scope of this thesis is only geared toward the visual rhetoric of the

church "at rest" not the actual proceedings therein. Therefore, the following will focus

<p align="center">77</p>

on the sundry technological elements visible in churches and what might be communicated by their presence.

As alluded to above, the employment of modern technology was the apparent mainstay in the megachurch and its imitators. In fact, the entire design of these churches seemed to revolve around how best to accommodate lights, cameras, video screens, and control booths, as well as how best to situate congregants to facilitate the reception of such high-tech accouterments. For the most part, the ceilings were not arced, vaulted, or steepled so that lighting elements could more easily be hung and managed. Stations for camera equipment were worked into the seating configuration, oftentimes in multiple locations (see Figures 46-47, 54-55). The stages were large expanses of space so that multiple, sizeable video screens could be mounted (see Figures 28-31). Extensive control booths were frequently situated in the center of the congregants, though sometimes in the rear or balcony (see Figures 27-31, 47, 55). For the congregants "viewing pleasure," most of these churches had theater-style seating arrangements, either pews or individual seats—some even with cup holders (see Figure 56). Additionally, many had terraced structures like an arena, several with varying levels (see Figures 46, 54, 56). Overall, not only was the interior designed like a theater or stadium, it *felt* like one.[4] Indeed, if congregants had been led blindfolded into the auditorium without knowledge of where

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[4] This theater/stadium effect was less palpable in churches newly "converted" to the megachurch paradigm via refurbishing and/or remodeling their previously more traditional sanctuaries; however, the prevalence of modern technology was often more "jarring" due to the clash of the "new" and the "old." In other words, many of the megachurch imitators simply tried to "retrofit" their existing sanctuaries, with the result being rather inelegant and often ostentatious.

they were being led, they would be hard pressed to equate their location with a church once the blindfolds were removed.

So what is visually communicated to the individual by this milieu? What mindset might the individual develop? The dominant impression this megachurch environment stimulated was much like that of a theater, concert hall, or sports arena—expectation, the expectation of being entertained. It was not a setting that suggested the interaction of proclamation and response or communal confession and praise, rather one that invited the individual to sit back and enjoy the "show." With the lights over the congregants dimmed, the focus was directed toward the brightly lit stage and the big screens, as if waiting for performers to take stage or for a drama to unfold upon the movie screens. This arrangement created the potential for a "disconnect" between preacher and parishioner, with the preacher possibly represented more as public entertainer than sacramental servant. Further compounding this potential was that a number of the megachurches were "satellite" churches spawned by a popular founding church, with no live preacher, only a video simulcast from the home church. Additionally, the placement of their rock bands being predominantly on stage contributed to the image of popular entertainment, like a talk show host with an accompanying orchestra (as opposed to the *offstage* liturgical accompaniment found in most traditional churches). Combined with the lack of the aforementioned creative use of lighting, spatial dynamics, and art to create a "transparency of purpose," the theater-style, technology-heavy megachurches were not "churchly" at all, neither expressive of any sort of theological ideology nor purposeful in creating a reverent, worshipful atmosphere.

The traditional churches, however, did not exhibit such advanced technology throughout their sanctuaries—at least not in such excess or in such overt ways. There were not complex lighting systems hanging from the rafters or on stands around the center of worship; rather, any spotlights or accent lights used were virtually hidden behind sundry architectural elements, like beams, pillars, and furnishings. Cameras were not often in evidence at all; in fact, it was only upon careful inspection or direct inquiry for purposes of this study that made manifest their use in some of these churches (apparently for the homebound members or local cable broadcast). Without exception, video screens were not included in any of the truly traditional churches. Similarly, there were no control booths housing high-tech equipment to be seen, let alone situated in the middle of the congregants; it was again only direct inquiry that discovered any such equipment to be tucked away in inconspicuous niches, like choir lofts, equipment rooms, or narthex alcoves. While research revealed that the traditional churches certainly used elements of modern technology, it was not to a degree that the technology apparatus became part of the visual stimuli of these churches and thus not a part of their nonverbal rhetoric.

Hence, on all four fronts under critique, lighting, spatial dynamics, art, and modern technology, the "communication gap" between the traditional churches and the megachurches proved to be more massive gulf than modest gap. In other words, they "spoke" two different languages. Since the time of Justinian the Great, "it was commonplace that the church building was seen as an allegory, even a sacrament, of the union of the people of God and of the Kingdom of God," but this "commonplace" language was shown to be "common" only in the traditional churches (Doig 68). The

megachurches "left out a few key items: crosses, stained glass windows, flying buttresses, altars and wooden pews. Instead, [they] replaced them with food kiosks, water fountains, cappuccino carts, convenient parking lots and a shopping mall feel" (Vrana). This "new" language had an accompanying "new" message:

> There is nothing inherently ungodly about music halls, stadiums, movie theaters, shopping centers, business parks or malls. They may be ugly and unconducive to enduring and flourishing cultural forms, but there is no divine layout for the mall. However, they are certainly not neutral. And a church which, in its attempt to reduce the discrepancies between the secular and the sacred, imitates one of these forms already preaches volumes concerning its view of God, humanity, sin, salvation, the church, worship, and discipleship. (Horton)

Rather than using architecture as a vehicle for transcendence, helping congregants' hearts and minds soar toward God and the sacred, heavenly things above, the megachurches and their imitators remain rooted in the secular, firmly grounding their congregants in the temporal things of this world.

The megachurch paradigm failed to understand that

> visual representation was a way of drawing the mind towards something beyond appearances, something that could not be revealed with earthly matter. Churches were infused with symbolism not so that the faithful might consciously note how, say, the twelve columns lining the nave represented the twelve apostles, but with the aim of focusing the attention subliminally on the divine. Such symbolism was a kind of invocation, a

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way of summoning heavenly truths into the world of humankind. (Ball 57)

Additionally, the megachurch paradigm failed to understand that

church buildings are required to carry a tremendous burden of emotional weight: they must allow us to rejoice at weddings and baptisms and grieve at funerals, and they must console us when we are hurting, repentant, in crisis, fearful, or despairing. (Schloeder, "Back to the Drawing Board" 37)

In contrast, the traditional church paradigm understood these concepts and has continued in the footsteps of the historic church, "challeng[ing] society in a profound architectural dialogue with the message of the Gospel, with buildings that speak to our minds with rich and fecund symbolic meaning, and that nourish our hearts with beauty" (Schloeder, "What Happened to Church Architecture?" 32).

With these fundamental differences summarized, this chapter has begun to establish a definite diversity of design in the two church paradigms, and subsequently in their visual rhetoric. As opposed to chapter two, where the exterior components were not so wholly divergent, the interior emotive factors discussed in this chapter have ascertained that the two styles of churches are indeed quite divergent. So what might this mean for Christianity? Can the two paradigms be so contrary and still cohabitate under the same expansive Christian umbrella? Are they even teaching the same faith? These are questions that certainly beg to be answered, but before exploring how such conflicting visual rhetoric might pertain to the teachings within these two styles of churches, the next chapter will address another important component, liturgical factors.
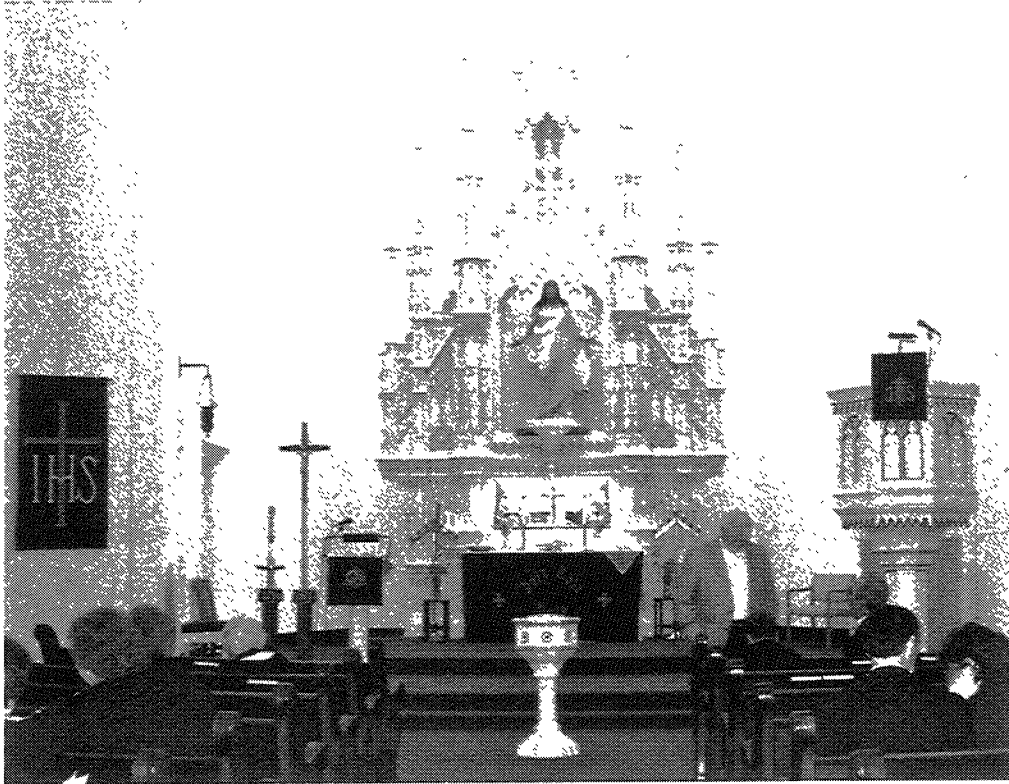
Figure 23. Altar at Shepherd of the City, Fort Wayne, IN.
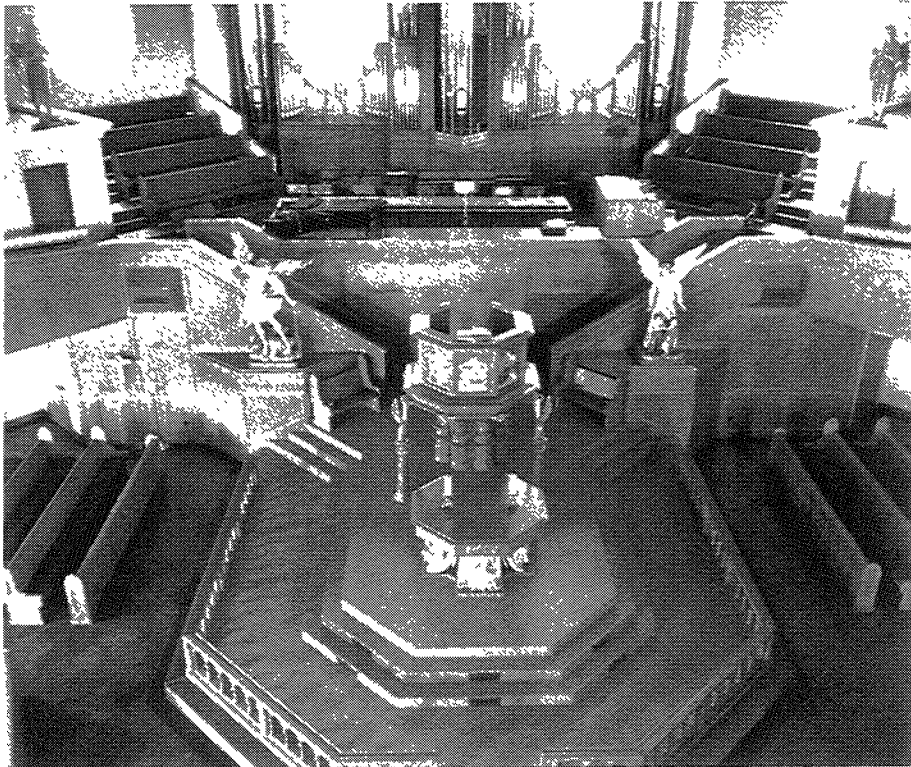
Figure 24. Pulpit at Our Savior Lutheran Church, Houston, TX.

Figure 25. Crucifix at St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church, The Woodlands, TX.

Figure 26. Baptismal font at Kramer Chapel, Fort Wayne, IN.

Figure 27. Stage at Calvary of Albuquerque, Albuquerque, NM.
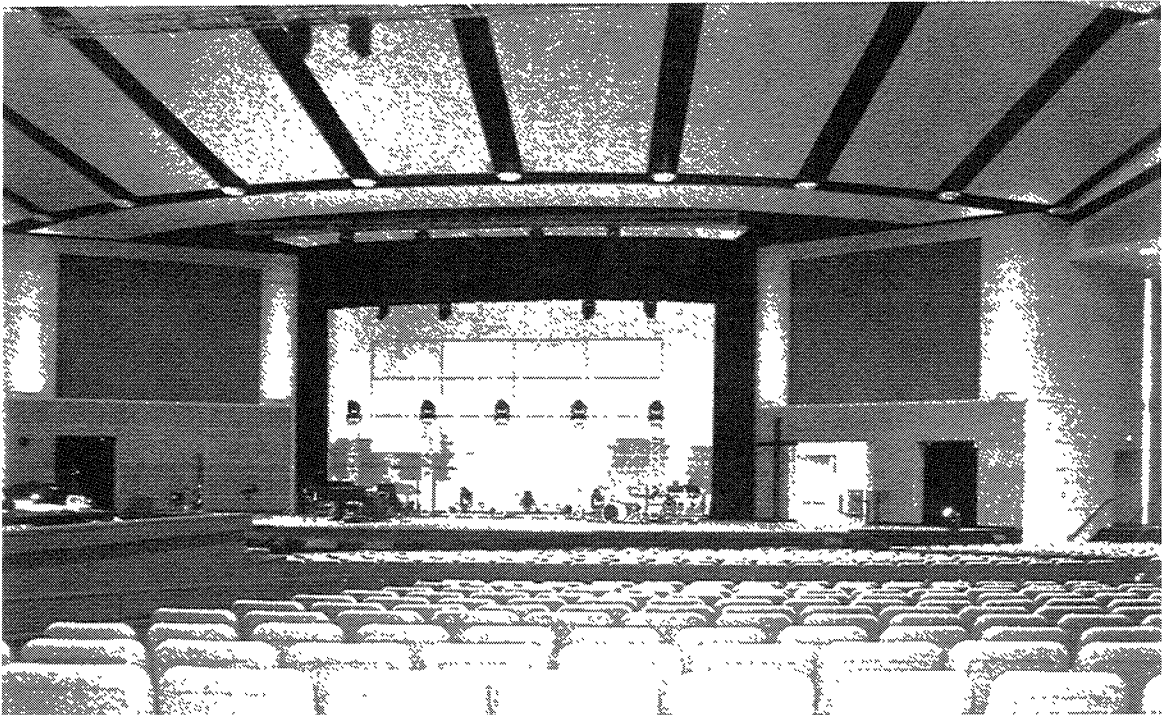
Figure 28. Stage at Woodlands Church, The Woodlands, TX.
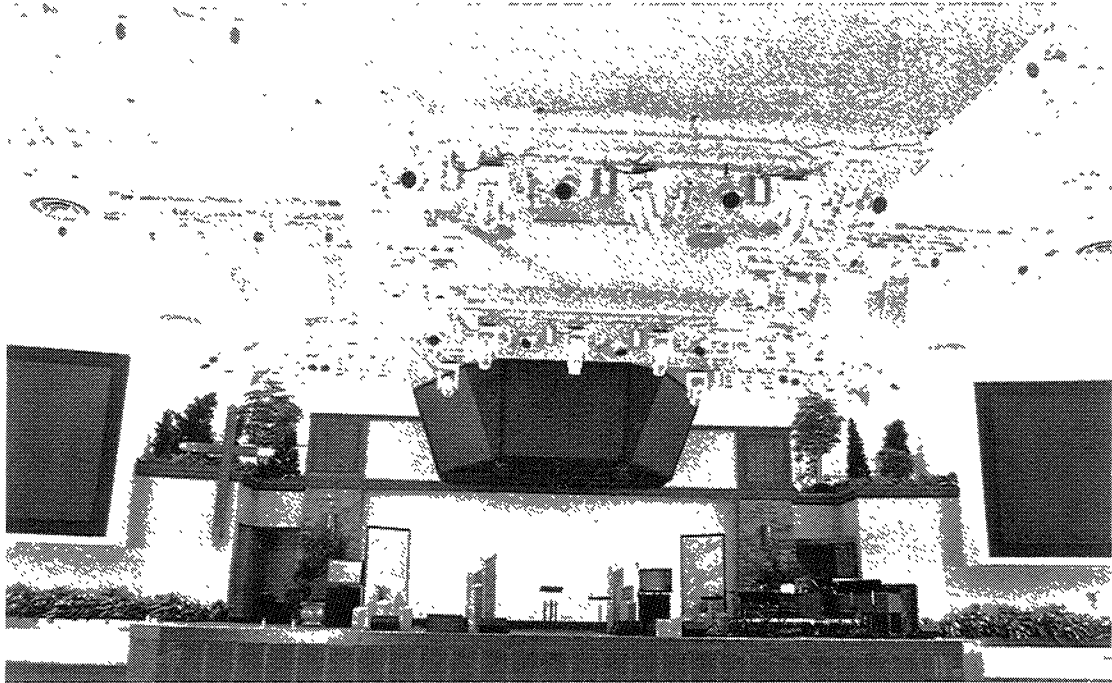
Figure 29. Stage at Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, CA.
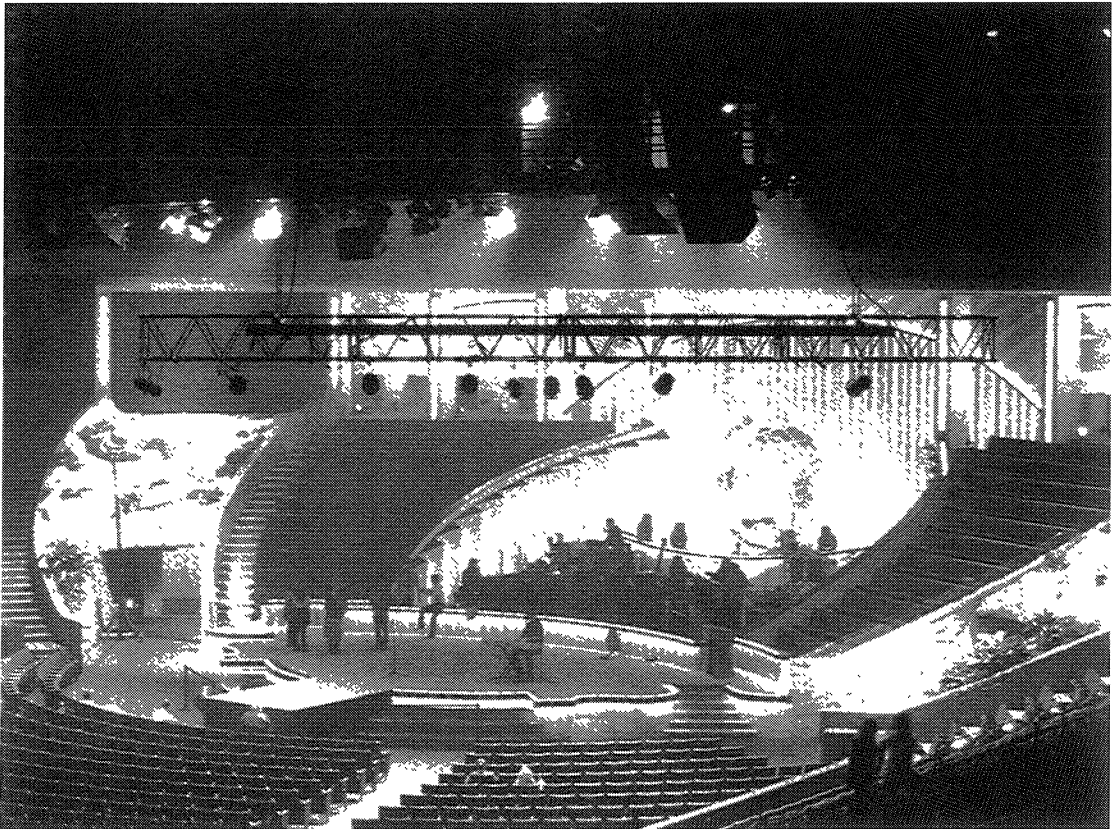
Figure 30. Stage at Lakewood Church, Houston, TX.

Figure 31. Stage at Cypress Church, Cypress, CA.
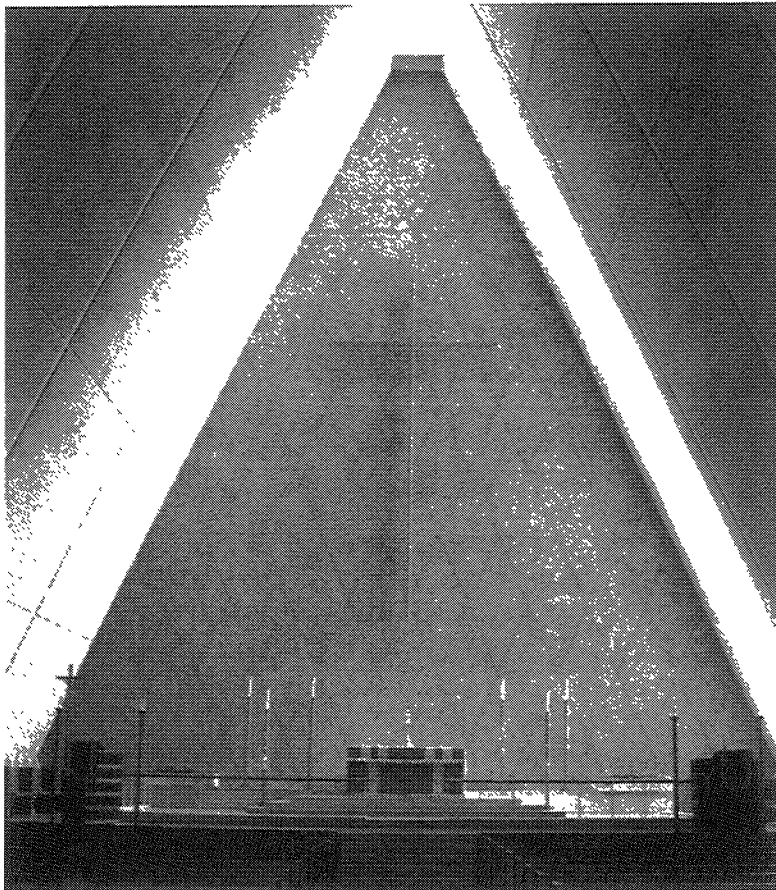
Figure 32. Chancel at Kramer Chapel, Fort Wayne, IN.

Figure 33. Chancel at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Austin, TX.

Figure 34. Sanctuary of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Houston, TX.
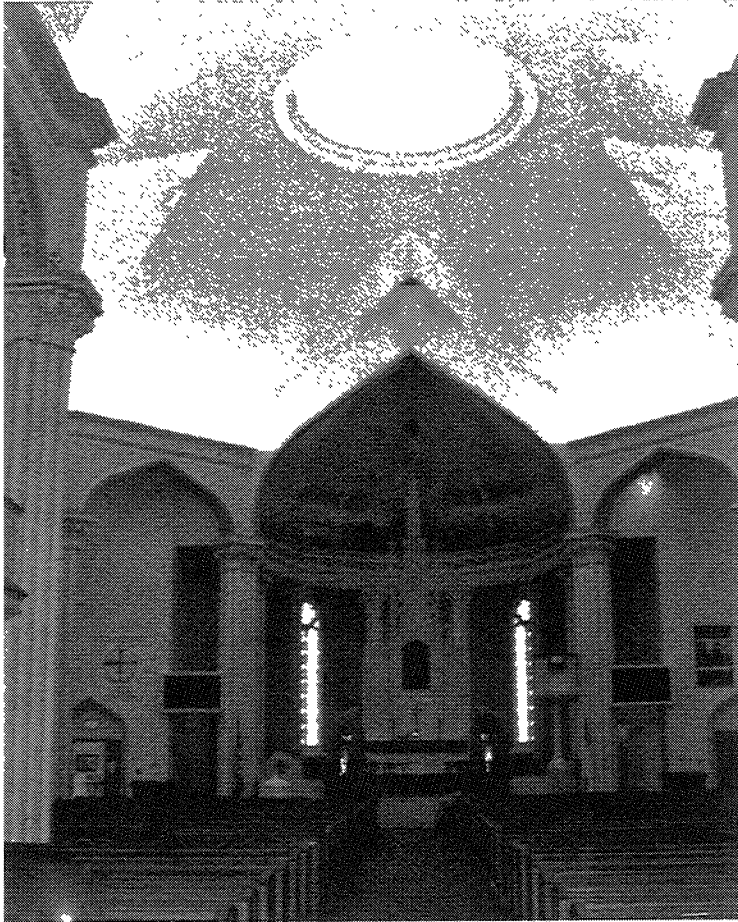
Figure 35. Sanctuary of St. Lorenz Lutheran Church, Frankenmuth, MI.

Figure 36. Domed skylight in the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Houston, TX.
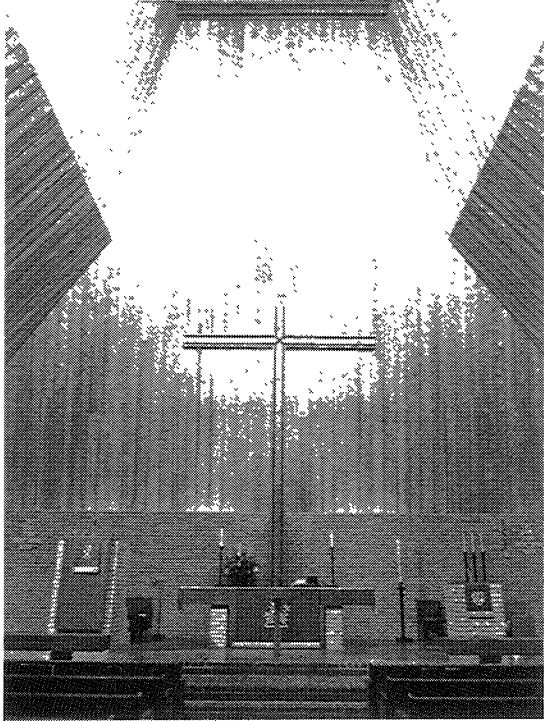
Figure 37. Chancel at Lutheran Memorial Church, Houston, TX.

Figure 38. Chancel at Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Houston, TX.
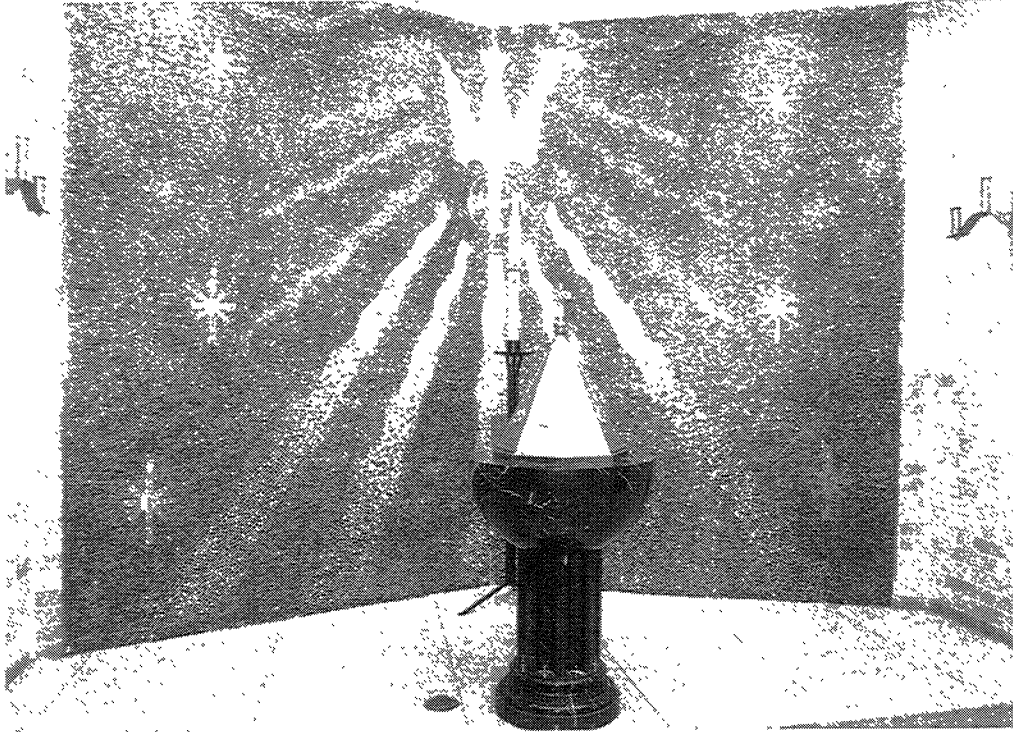
Figure 39. Baptistery at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Austin, TX.

Figure 40. Center aisle of Anthony of Padua Catholic Church, The Woodlands, TX.

Figure 41. Center aisle of Our Savior Lutheran Church, Houston, TX.

Figure 42. Center aisle of Living Word Lutheran Church, The Woodlands, TX.
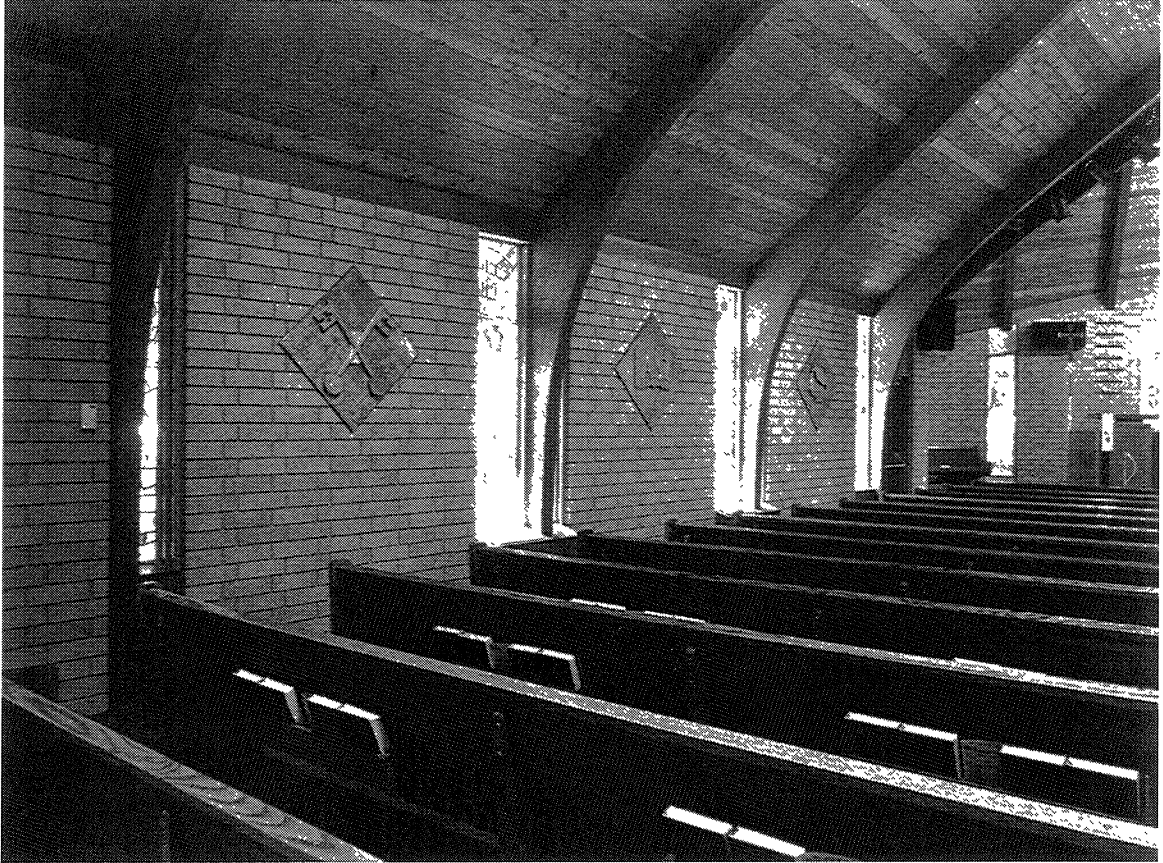
Figure 43. Side aisle of Christ the King Lutheran Church, Redlands, CA.

Figure 44. Center aisle of the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles, CA.
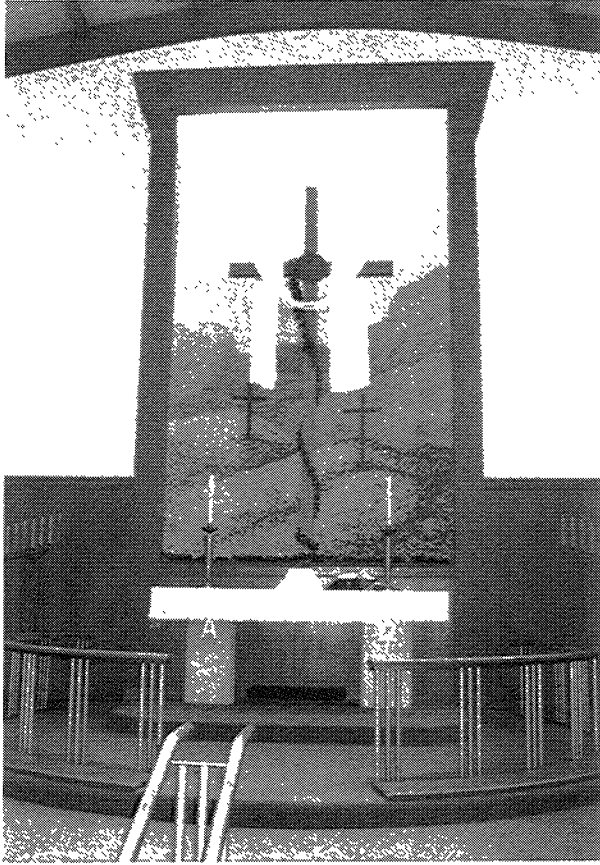
Figure 45. Chancel at Trinity Lutheran Church, Whittier, CA.
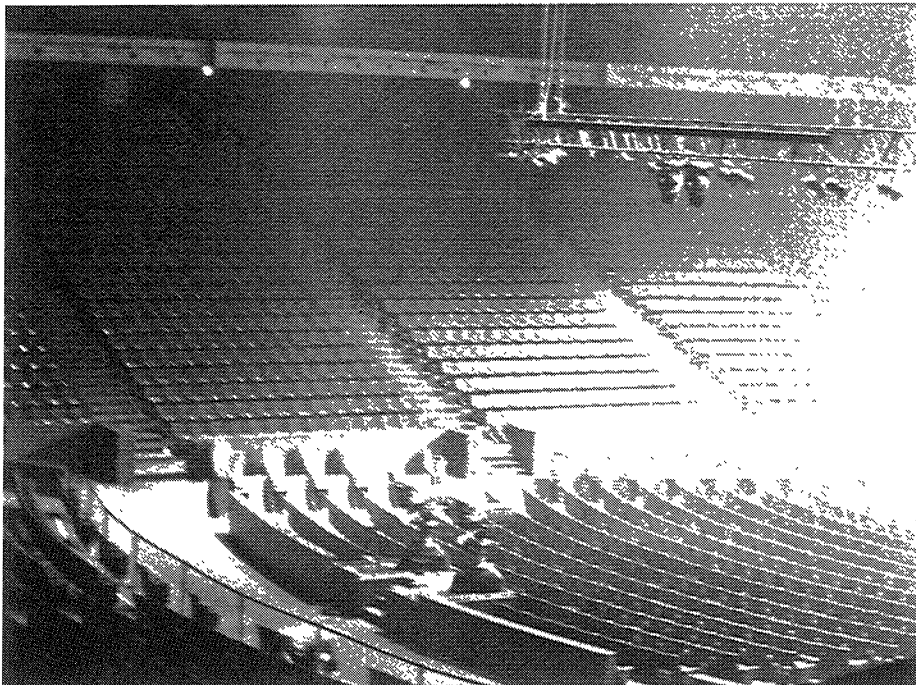
Figure 46. Seating at Lakewood Church, Houston, TX.

Figure 47. Seating at Sea Coast Grace Church, Cypress, CA.
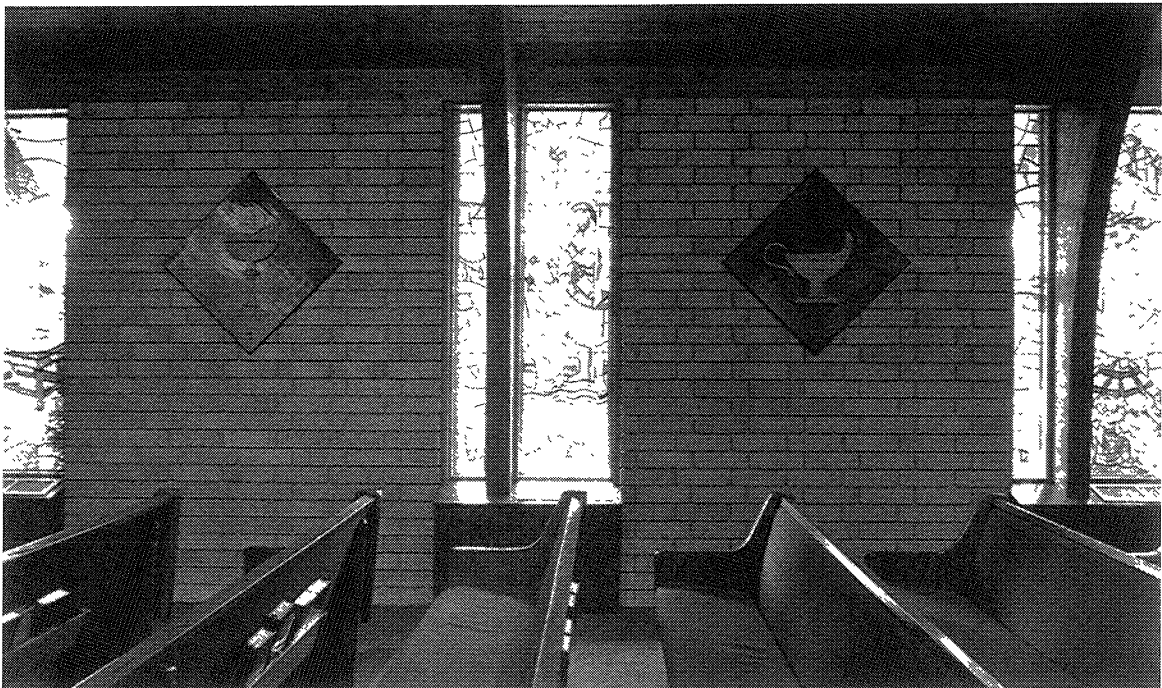
Figure 48. Stained glass at Christ the King Lutheran Church, Redlands, CA.

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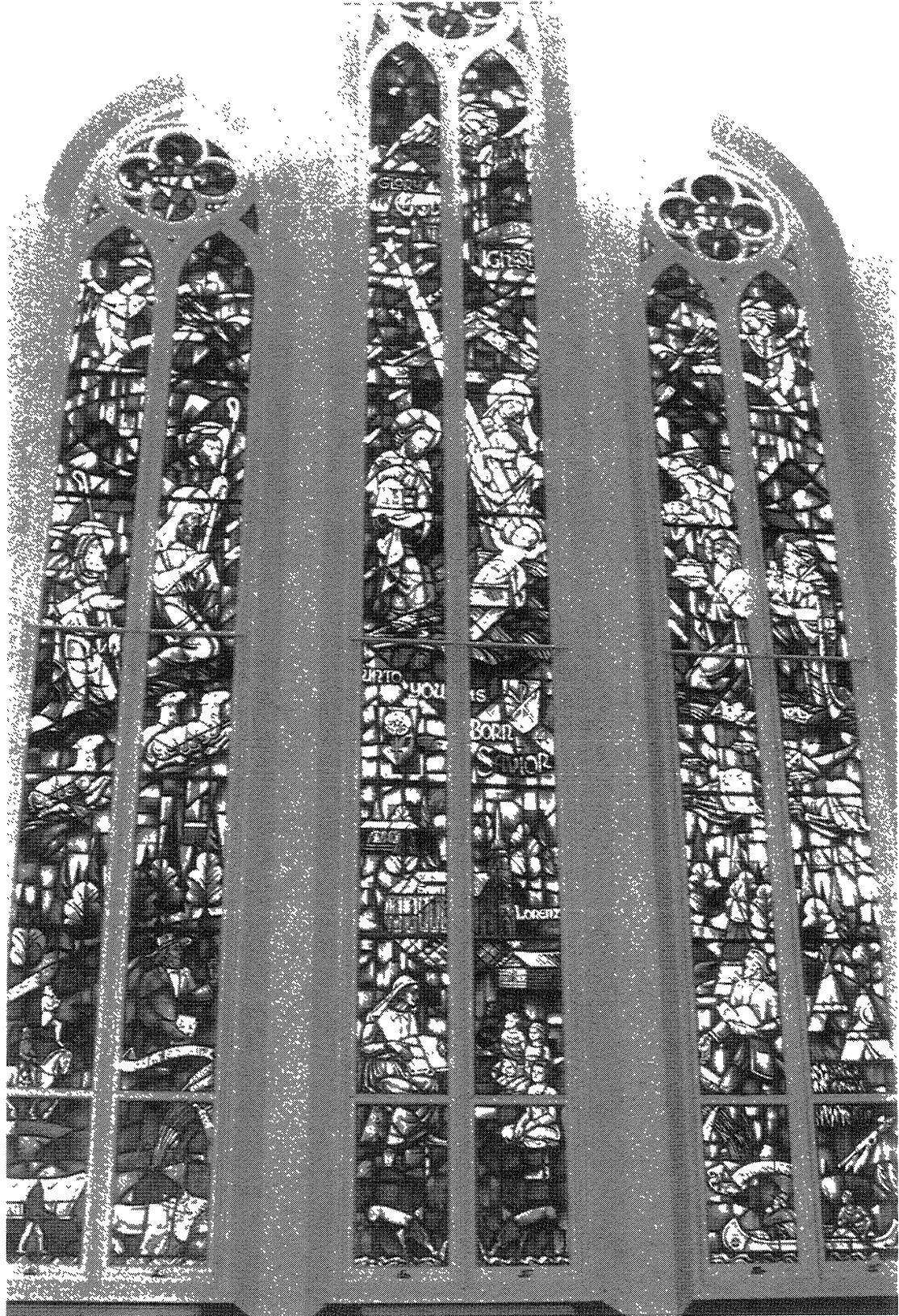
Figure 49. Stained glass at St. Lorenz Lutheran Church, Frankenmuth, MI.
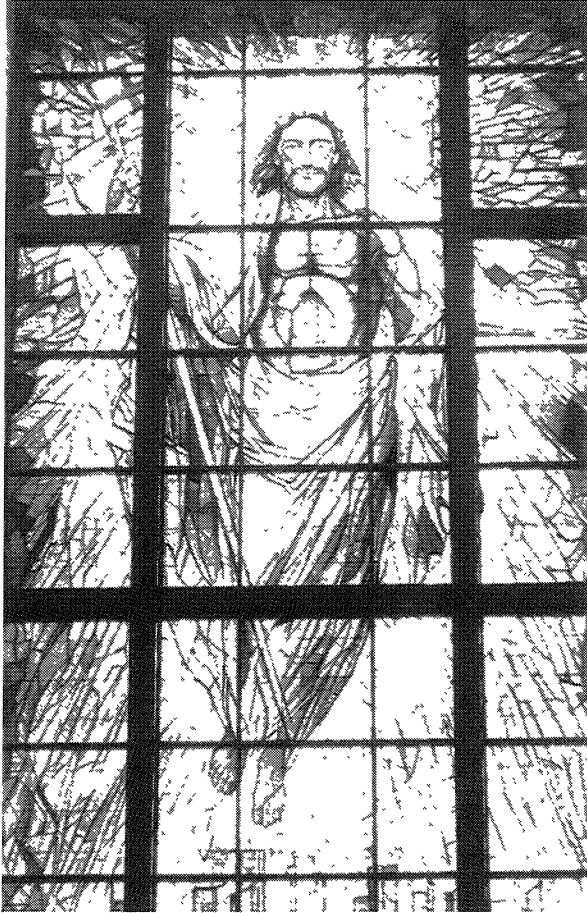
Figure 50. Stained glass at the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Houston, TX.

Figure 51. Painted panels at Kramer Chapel, Fort Wayne, IN.

Figure 52. Side aisle with Stations of the Cross at the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Houston, TX.

Figure 53. Stations of the Cross at the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Houston, TX.
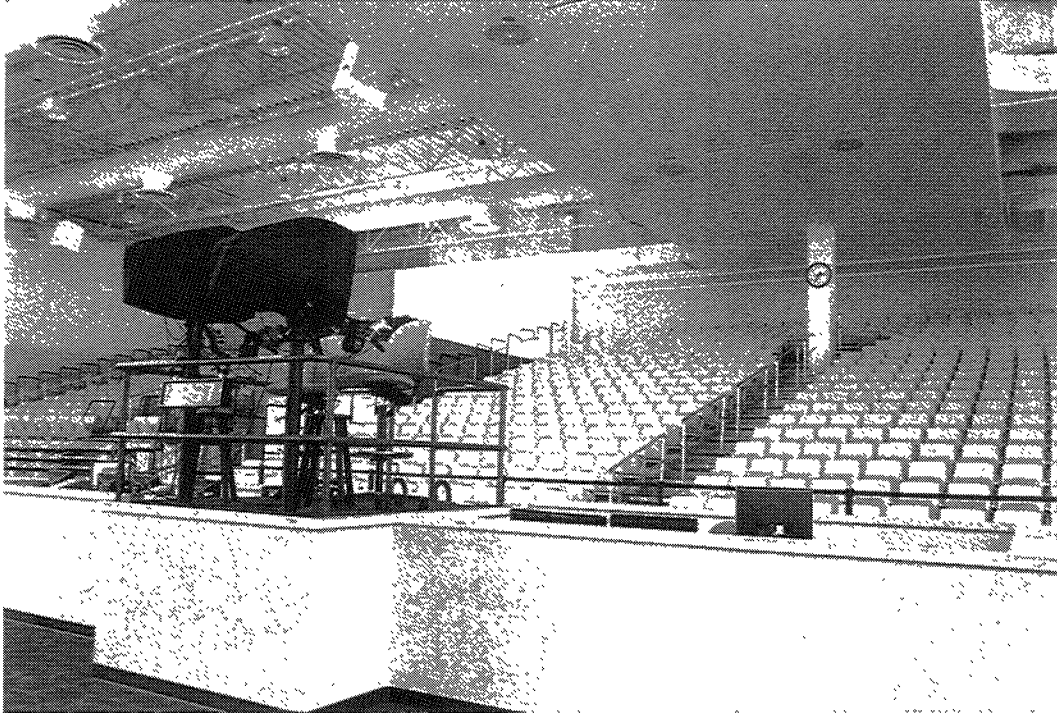
Figure 54. Camera booth at Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, CA.

Figure 55. Sound, lighting, and camera booth at Woodlands Church, The Woodlands, TX.
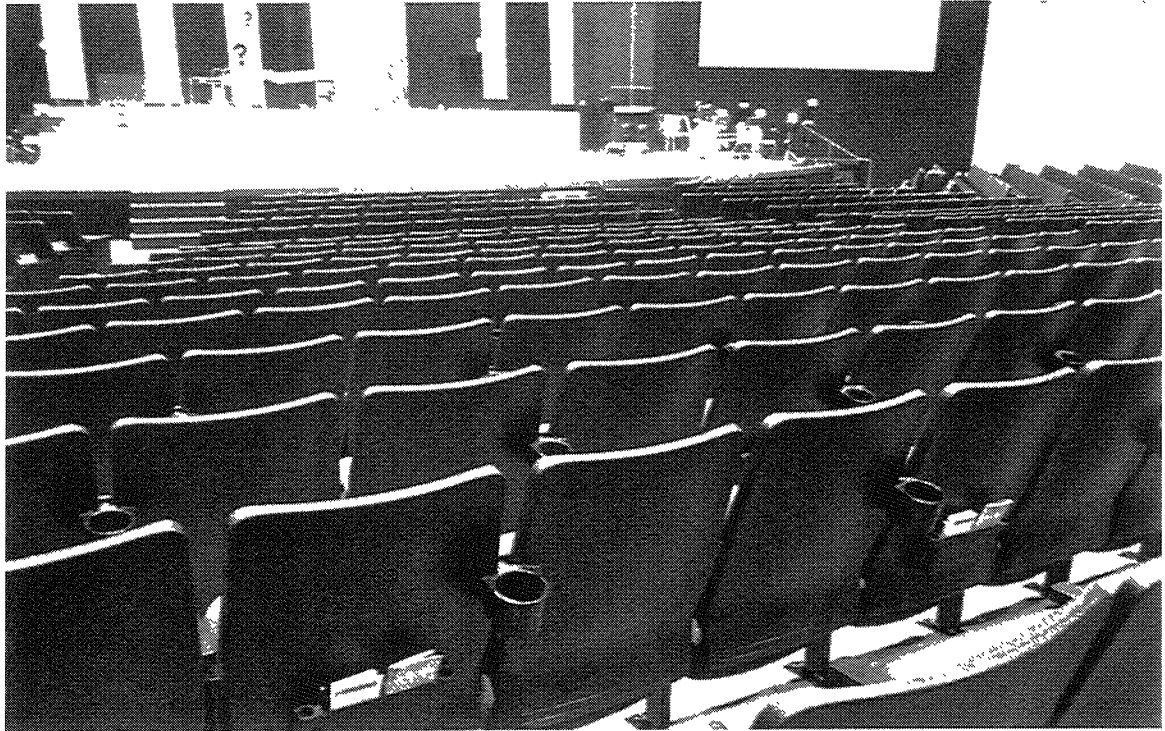
Figure 56. Stadium seating and cupholders at Sea Coast Grace Church, Cypress, CA.

Figure 57. Baptismal font at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Long Beach, CA.
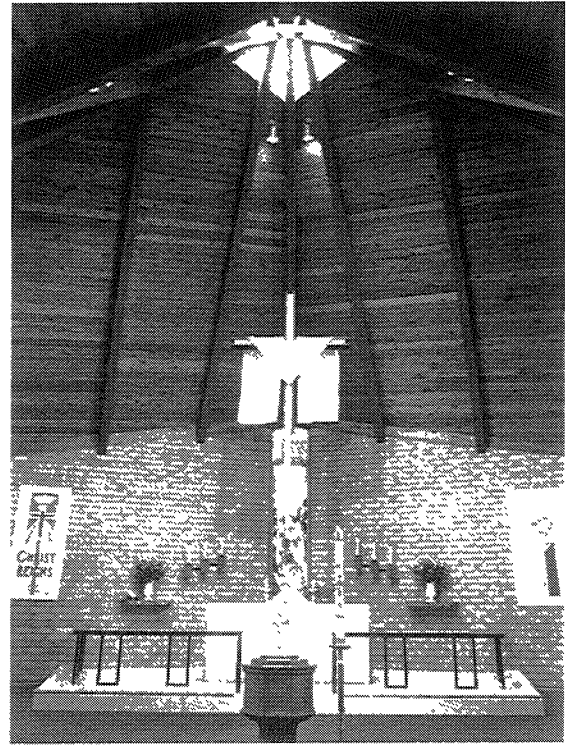
Figure 58. Baptismal font at Christ the King Lutheran Church, Redlands, CA.
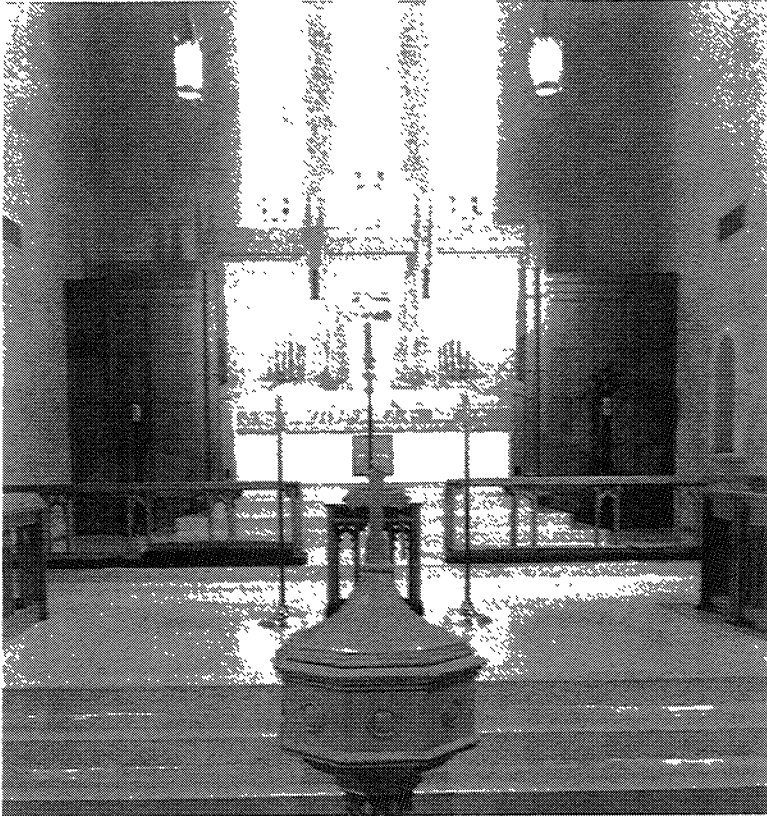
Figure 59. Baptismal font at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Austin, TX.
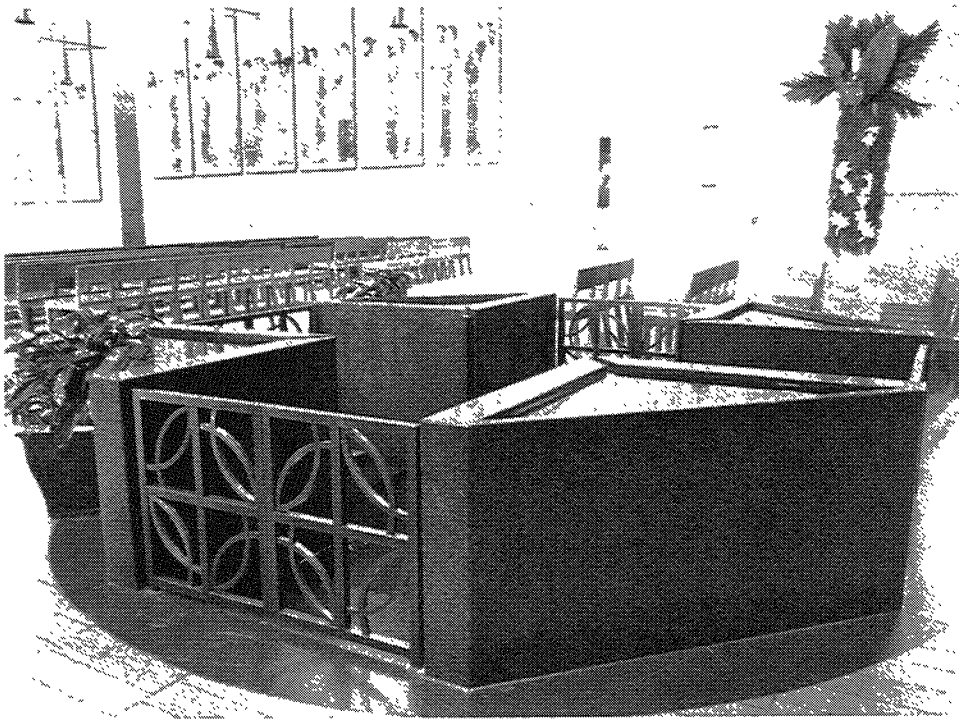
Figure 60. Baptismal font at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles, CA.

Figure 61. Baptismal font at Anthony of Padua Catholic Church, The Woodlands, TX.
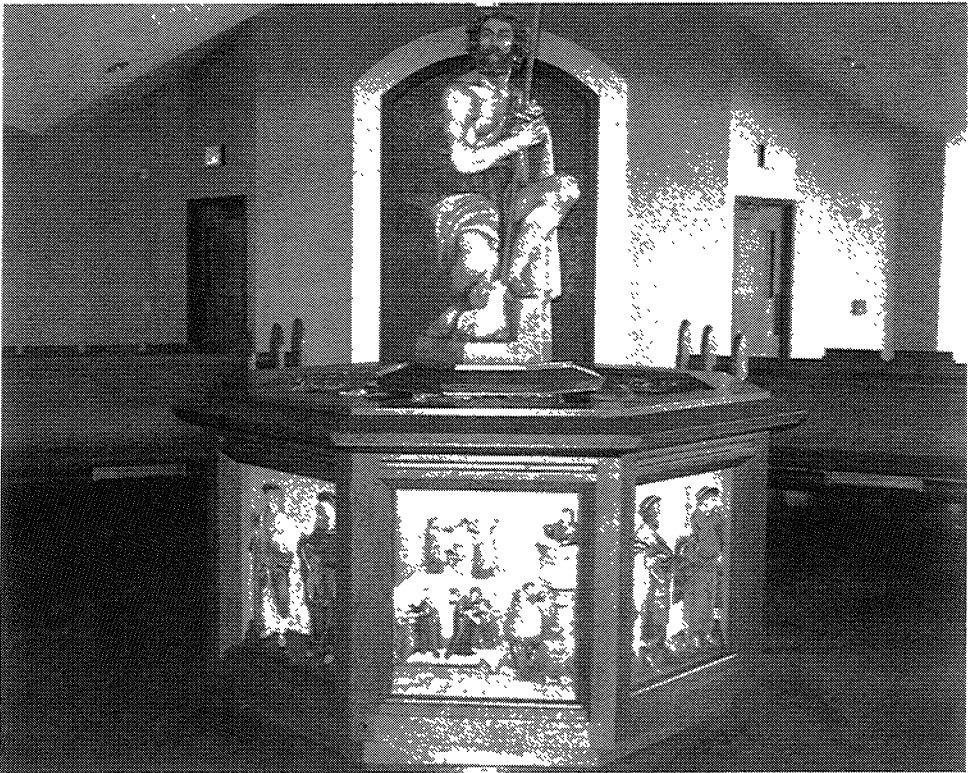
Figure 62. Baptismal font at Our Savior Lutheran Church, Houston, TX.

Figure 63. Baptismal font at the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Houston, TX.

Figure 64. Chancel at Christ the King Lutheran Church, Redlands, CA.

Figure 65. Chancel at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Long Beach, CA.
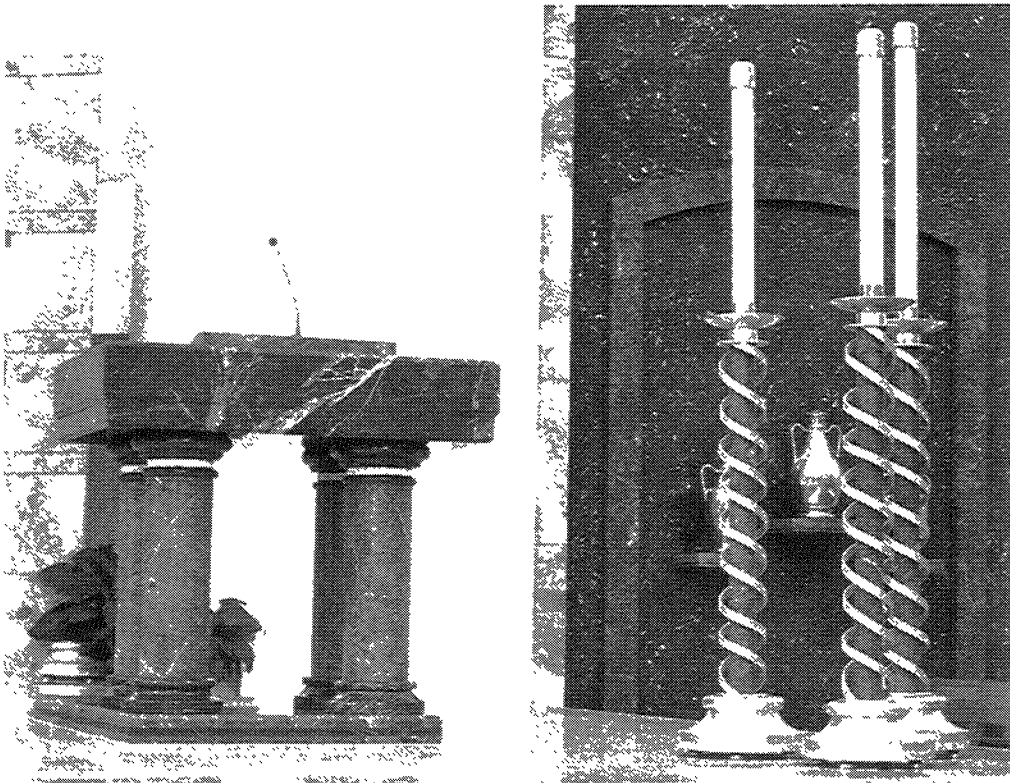
Figure 66. Pulpit at the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Houston, TX.

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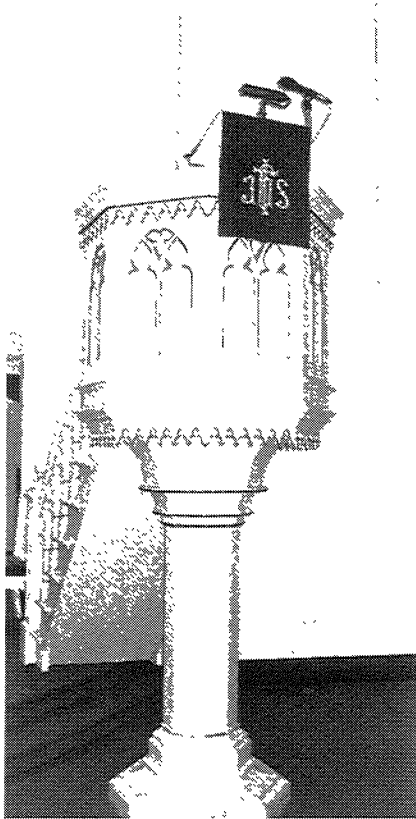
Figure 67. Pulpit at Shepherd of
the City, Fort Wayne, IN.

Figure 68. Pulpit at Our Savior Lutheran
Church, Houston, TX.

Figure 69. Pulpit at Kramer Chapel, Fort Wayne, IN.
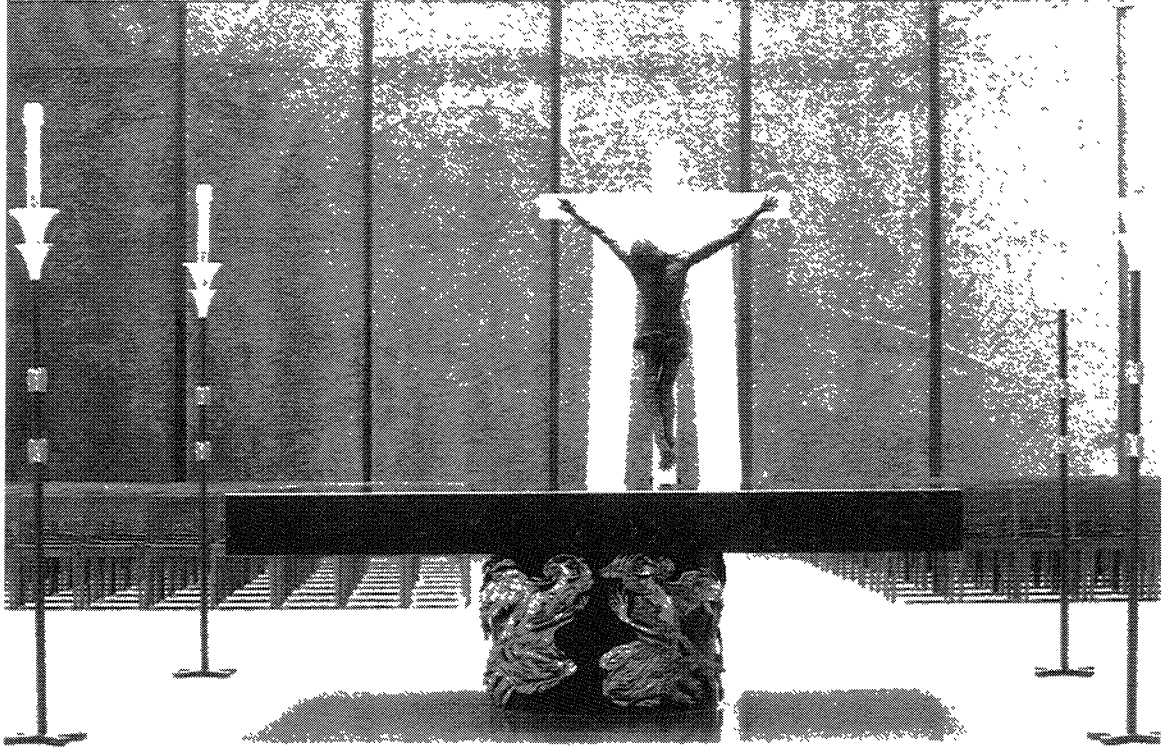
Figure 70. Altar at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles, CA.
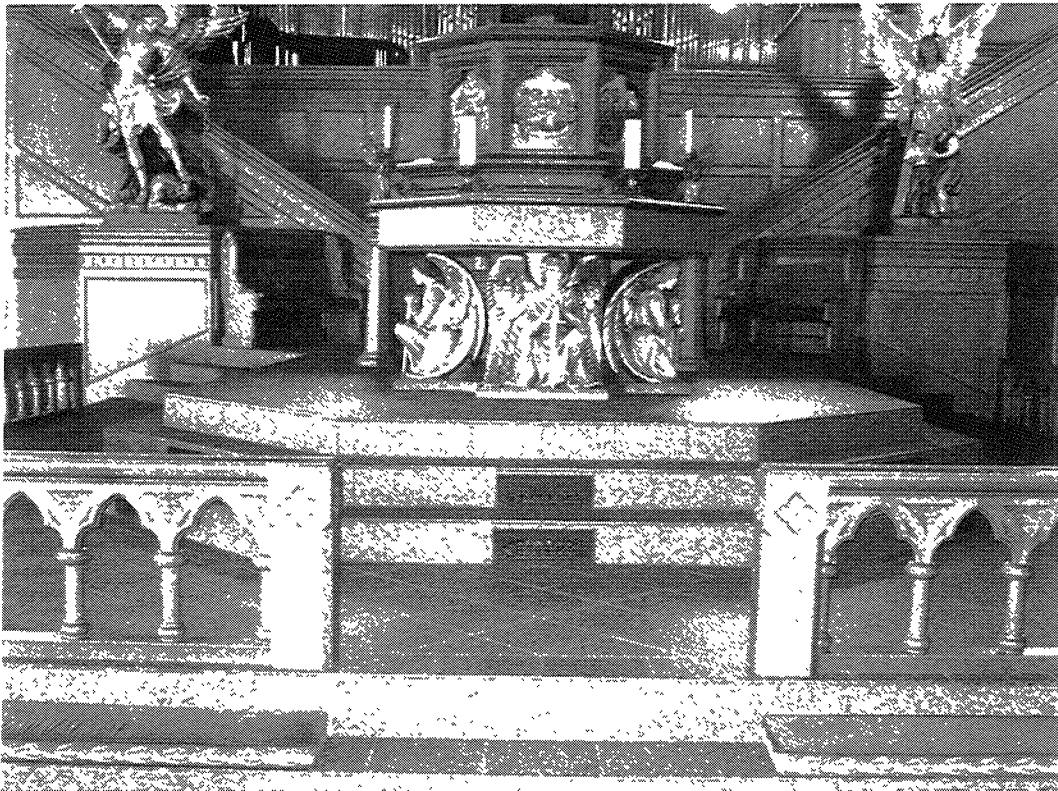
Figure 71. Altar at Our Savior Lutheran Church, Houston, TX.

CHAPTER 4

THE INTERIOR: LITURGICAL FACTORS

As powerful as emotive factors in a church can be in elevating congregants to the

sublime, as helpful as they can be in visually teaching the ideology of the church, the

primary function of the historical church has always been the preaching and

administering of Word and Sacrament. Accordingly, the foundational elements of church

architecture have always been the liturgical factors: font, pulpit, and altar—the objects

used in the sacred acts of baptizing, preaching, and communing.[1] This is *not* to say that

the sacred acts performed at the liturgical centers of font, pulpit, and altar cannot also be

highly emotive. The intimate communion with God through the adoption of baptism, the

partaking of His body and blood, and the hearing of His Word can be profoundly

emotional. However, above and beyond the subjective, the font, pulpit, and altar are

where the objective means of grace are distributed; therefore, they are truly the

foundational elements of the church.

As outlined in chapter one, Christians have gathered together in everything from

houses to shops to basilicas, but always around these three main liturgical centers,

whether in the crudest of forms or the grandest. Emotive factors were incorporated to

compliment, support, and highlight this God-centered, Scripture-directed worship,

"neither rivet[ing] our attention to earthly temple-worship, . . . nor distract[ing] us from

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[1] This is not to assert that there are no other liturgical factors, only that these three
have been the most important and consistent throughout Christian church history.

heavenly worship by an austerity or an outright ugliness that results from denying the role

of material environment" (Horton). Thus, it is possible for a church that has a scarcity of

emotive factors to have the same Christ-centered, cross-focused drive as a church with a

plethora of emotive factors, provided both retain the essential liturgical components. For

> if the Christian takes seriously what the Bible has to say about the power
>
> of sin and the necessity of being joined to Christ, then the Sacraments
>
> which minister to the weakness of our faith and join us to Christ and all
>
> His benefits will of necessity play a visually prominent part in our
>
> architecture. (Bruggink and Droppers 133)

While not sacred in and of themselves, simply in the employ of sacred acts, the liturgical

elements are the instruments by which the church has disseminated the Word of God and

distributed His gifts since the very beginning of Christianity; ideological in nature, they

are also an enduring means through which transcendence can be attained.

Therefore, it is important for this study to go beyond the emotive factors in

Christian churches across the United States and explore the liturgical factors as well. For

instance, how do the two distinct styles of churches implement these factors? What

emphasis do the two styles of churches place upon liturgical elements? What is visually

communicated by the inclusion, or exclusion, of these basic churchly appointments?

What does the importance placed upon liturgical things convey to the church body? The

following will endeavor to answer these questions and more in regard to all three historic

liturgical factors: font, pulpit, and altar.

<u>Baptismal Font</u>

At the start of His ministry, Jesus Himself was baptized, and "at that moment heaven was opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on Him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased'" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Matthew 3.16b-17). He did this *not* to wash away any sin on His part, but to fulfill the law and prophecy, as well as to become the substitute for all humanity, bearing the sins of the world. At the close of His ministry, after His death and resurrection but before ascending into heaven, Jesus was again focused on baptism, admonishing His followers to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Matthew 28.19).[2] He did this that all might become heirs of the Father's kingdom, beneficiaries of the Son's redeeming act, and recipients of the Holy Spirit's life-giving, life-sustaining power and presence (Concordia Self-Study Bible 1496-1497). In so doing, Christ established baptism as a life-saving gift. "Baptism is not to inform God that we are His, but to assure that we belong to God. Baptism is the sign to assure us of the reality which has taken place for us in Christ and is communicated by the Holy Spirit" (Bruggink and Droppers 132). For it is not mere water in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, but water and the Word of God, where "baptism now saves . . . not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves

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[2] Baptism, from the Greek "baptizo," meaning cleansing or washing, was not a new religious concept at this point in history. For example, Jewish sects like the Essenes used baptism as a ritual cleansing for initiation into its practices. In Christian history, John the Baptist, the forerunner to the Messiah, performed a baptism of repentance, in anticipation of the Savior's coming; whereas, Jesus Christ, the long-awaited Savior, commissioned His disciples to baptize in the name of the Triune God for the forgiveness of sins and reception of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 19:4-5; Acts 2:38).

you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, 1 Peter 3.21).

Accordingly, the Holy Rite of Baptism, the "new circumcision," was instituted in the

historic Christian church and has endured ever since.

In all of the traditional churches observed in this study, liturgical space was

clearly carved out for baptismal purposes. As referenced in chapter three, baptism is

often considered "entry" into the body of Christ; hence, many of these churches had their

fonts situated near the entrance of the church to remind congregants of the "divine"

initiation where Christian life begins (see Figures 38, 40-41). Others had their fonts near,

or in, the chancel area, close to pulpit and altar—conveying an emphasis on Word and

Sacrament, the means of grace appointed by Christ Himself to create and sustain

Christian faith (see Figures 23, 42, 57-59). But wherever the font was located in these

churches, it stood "in the face of the congregation" so that all might bear witness to the

adoption of the baptized into Christ and stood "emphatically before the congregation as a

continuing reminder of this redemptive relationship to Christ" (Bruggink and Droppers

168).

Furthermore, most churches designed their fonts to include one or more types of

symbolism, some subtly, others concretely. An example of the subtle use of symbolism

was how most fonts were eight-sided, encompassing a multitude of theological meanings

(see Figures 23, 42, 57-63): as the *eight* souls aboard Noah's ark were saved through the

waters that washed away sinful humanity, so baptism saves through the washing away of

sin; as circumcision on the *eighth* day was entrance into the covenant of God in the Old

Testament, so baptism, the "new circumcision," is entrance into the new covenant of

Jesus; and as Christ was resurrected on the *eighth* day, marking the start of the "new

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creation," so baptism marks the baptized as new creations in Christ.[3] An example of the more concrete use of symbolism was how many of these fonts were embellished. Our Savior Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas, had a statue of John the Baptist on top of its large font, with renderings of the disciples and baptismal events depicted in bas-relief on each of its eight panels (see Figure 62). Similarly, the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Houston, Texas, had baptismal related illustrations in bas-relief on each of its eight panels, though using different materials and different artistic design (see Figure 63). Additionally, these two churches, as well as several others, featured perpetually running water in their fonts, symbolizing the living waters of Christ through baptism: "the sight and sound of living, running water is a powerful key to our remembering all of the meanings of water suggested by nature as well as all the meanings of water and Baptism suggested by Scripture" (Huffmann 22). The full immersion fonts, like that at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles, California, with its unique take on being eight-sided, dramatically reminding one of "dying with Christ and rising anew in Him" through Holy Baptism—the descent into the font being akin to death and burial, the ascent akin to rebirth and/or resurrection (see Figure 60): "we were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Romans 6.4). Elaborate or simple, at the entrance or at the chancel, small or large, the instrument for the sacred act of Holy Baptism, the font, was undeniably an integral part

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[3] The eighth day resurrection refers to the resurrection of Jesus on a Sunday, which early Christians believed extended God's creative activity beyond the seven-day week, making the first day, Sunday, also the eighth day of God's work. In other words, Christ's resurrection was seen as an extension to creation, the eighth day of creation, in that His divine intervention redeemed fallen creation and created new life.

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of the traditional churches, clearly proclaimed as an essential component to the Christian faith—like Tertullian's "little fish," Christians cannot leave the font for they will die out of the water (Aquilina 26). In other words, these churches visually proclaimed their ideology of baptism—that it is not just a one-time event (for a Christian does not say "I *was* baptized" but "I *am* baptized"); it is a *way of life*, a participation in the new creation wrought by Christ's death and resurrection.

However, in the megachurches, this "way of life" was not clearly manifest. Visually speaking, there were no indicators within these church sanctuaries that baptism was even part of their church doctrine, let alone something of any significance (see Figures 27-30).[4] While the investigation for this paper did reveal that most of these churches still practiced baptism to one degree or another, it was predominantly performed in a location separate from the church proper, either onsite or off. This was in contrast to the traditional churches, which portrayed baptism "as part of the worship life of the gathered community as opposed to something done during an obscure and alternative time" (Potente and Zersen 27). As a result, the megachurches contained no reminders of the washing of regeneration, no suggestions that baptism was even part of the Christian life, never mind a "way of life." As such, observations of placement, size, symbolic design, or other potential details could not be critiqued as part of the visual rhetoric of these churches.

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[4] Once more, an exception must be noted in regard to churches that had attempted to refurbish and/or remodel their existing, more traditional sanctuaries to pattern themselves after the basic theater style of the megachurch. In most of these instances, there remained a place designated for the baptismal font—though frequently deemphasized or relocated to a significantly less prominent location.

Even so, the *absence* of this historic church element revealed much of the ideology of these churches. This "missing element" gave the impression that these churches do not view baptism as having any real importance—certainly not a sacred act, perhaps something only optional, or even unnecessary. Bearing no visual stimuli of baptism in their sanctuaries, these churches seemed to imply that there was no need of recalling one's baptism, no regard for being a "fish out of water," as was church father Tertullian's concern. Moreover, such a departure from the historical church practice intimated that their ideology was also a departure from historical church doctrine.

Thus, the role played by this first liturgical factor, the baptismal font, exposed differences that divided the two types of churches even more patently than all of the emotive factors delineated in chapter three. For "churches are not built primarily to create works of art, but to provide the setting for common worship," and more significant than emotive factors in providing this setting are the liturgical factors through which the means of grace are distributed (White, *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture* 180). Hence, if the divergent representation of baptism in the two styles of churches does indeed reflect opposing ideologies (and very different settings for worship), can the two reside harmoniously under the shelter of the same expansive Christian umbrella? Before addressing this question, the next liturgical factor, the pulpit, should be considered.

<u>Pulpit</u>

Scripture states that God spoke to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden as a father speaks to his children—directly. Later, He spoke to His people through the patriarchs, judges, kings, and prophets. Still later, He spoke through His Son, Jesus, who then commissioned His followers to carry on in His stead. But by whatever means God

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chose, His purpose was clear—to communicate with His people, to reveal His will, to make known His promises. For it is through the Word of God that faith comes, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered, died, and rose again for the salvation of all people: " . . . faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Romans 10.17). Indeed, "the content of the Gospels does not consist of the details of rite and ritual, but of the teachings of Jesus, which function not as ends in themselves, but as a means of revealing Christ" (Bruggink and Droppers 61).

Moreover, Christ is not just the source and means of this testimony, He *is* the Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, John 1.1, 14). Therefore, the Word is "performative"— there is power behind the words. For example, "God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Genesis 1.3). Likewise, God spoke through His prophets and thus it was done: "Not one of all the Lord's good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Joshua 21.45). Additionally, Jesus, the Word made flesh, spoke, and it was so: to Lazarus, four days dead in the grave, Jesus said, "'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face," and to a leper, Jesus said, "'Be clean!' Immediately he was cured of his leprosy" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, John 11.43b-44, Matthew 8.3). "Performative" indeed, "the Word of God is living and active" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Hebrews 4.12a).

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Furthermore, the power and message of God's Word has been historically focused on the preached Word itself, not the preacher. For example, in his travels, the apostle Paul was forced to settle quarrels amongst the Corinthian believers, who were aligning themselves with individual evangelists over and above the message they were preaching. He therefore admonished them that it was only in Christ that salvation rests, neither in a particular man nor the skillfulness of his speech—"we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, 1 Corinthians 1.23). Paul continued in this vein saying,

> I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power. (Concordia Self-Study Bible, 1 Corinthians 2.1-3)

And "when Paul says that 'we preach Christ crucified' he might add that Christ is not only the subject of the sermon but the power which makes it possible" (White, *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture* 36). In other words, Paul knew, as the other apostles knew, that it was the Holy Spirit working through the preached Word that created faith, not the "instruments" of that preached Word. For as Jesus told the disciples, "It will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Matthew 10.20). Similarly, Jesus said, "He who listens to you listens to Me; he who rejects you rejects Me; but he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me"

(Concordia Self-Study Bible, Luke 10.16). Accordingly, the historic Christian church has endeavored to downplay the personality of the minister so that the words and sacramental acts that the minister performs direct the congregants' attention to the person of Christ in His Word and Sacrament. As John the Baptist declared, "[Christ] must become greater; I must become less" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, John 3.30).[5]

One way the church strove to accomplish this goal was by incorporating the pulpit, a designated place where "God Himself deigns to speak to the hearers through the Word that is read and preached, and thus to awaken faith in them" (Filthaut 57). As outlined in chapter one, even the earliest churches created some sort of liturgical "center" for preaching and teaching; since then, the tradition has continued, in a variety of designs, heights, and settings—all with the intent to place focus on the preached Word of God and not the preacher. In regard to the height and setting of the pulpit, normally care was taken to situate it so that "the speaker stands turned toward the congregation, vis-à-vis the hearers; here he is close to them, sees all of them, and in turn can be seen and heard by all" (Filthaut 60). In regard to design, the pulpit varied significantly from church to church, from century to century, with some "more successful than others in echoing the note of authority found in preaching, authority which is of God, not of man" (White, *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture* 36).

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[5] John made this statement in response to his followers' concern that people were leaving him to follow Jesus. They did not yet understand that Jesus was the Messiah whom John had been prophesying about, thus prompting John to teach them further of Christ and how He, Christ, must surely "increase" and he, John, must "decrease."

In keeping with this practice, all of the traditional churches included in this study incorporated some sort of pulpit.[6] The pulpits differed widely in design and height throughout the assortment of churches, but they were all situated near, or in, the chancel. Their loci seemed to be in harmony with the processional nature of the churches' interior design, where the architectural flow visually navigated congregants' attention forward to the chancel, pulpit, and altar (see Figures 23-25, 32, 34-35, 37, 42, 57-59). The close proximity of pulpit and altar created a "visual relationship" between the two, reinforcing the "underlying unity between the Word made present in preaching and the Word visible in the Sacrament" (White, *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture* 49). This interrelationship was especially poignant in churches that built the pulpit and altar as one piece of furniture or in such near proximity as to appear as one (see Figure 24).

In regard to height, pulpits varied from no elevation, other than being part of the raised chancel, to a slight increased elevation, involving a step or two, to a lofty elevation, requiring a staircase to ascend (see Figures 23-24, 32, 42, 64-65). A functional purpose for the size and elevation differences of these pulpits was observed to be for the sake of maximizing visibility, as sanctuaries of greater size and capacity tended to have larger and higher pulpits, and sanctuaries of modest size and capacity tended to have somewhat smaller and lower pulpits. However, the size and elevation of a pulpit can have symbolic purpose as well; for a substantial pulpit can visually attest to the weighty substance of the preached Word, and an elevated pulpit can visually express the elevated

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[6] In addition to a pulpit, the Catholic cathedrals were observed to include an elaborate seat of the celebrant, or "cathedra," which in Roman Catholic tradition is sometimes from whence the Word is read/preached (as was frequently Jewish custom and the practice of Jesus Himself; see Luke 4:16-21, Matthew 26:55, John 8:2). Therefore, it is akin to a pulpit in function and can be included in this liturgical category.

position of the Word, as well as increase the ethos of the proclaimer, God's "mouthpiece" for the dissemination of His Word. For example, the pulpit in the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Houston, Texas, was not elevated to any significant height, but it was of substantial design, with a thick block marble top resting upon four solid, marble-columned legs (see Figure 66). Even without a cleric present or a word spoken, the pulpit itself still seemed to proclaim the significance of God's Word. In the same way, the lofty elevation of the pulpit in St. Lorenz Lutheran Church, Frankenmuth, Michigan, visually eluded to the transcendence of God and His Word, as well as imparting a sense of expectation of what would ensue from such an eminent dais (see Figure 67).

With reference to design, the traditional church pulpits also varied widely. Some were quite simple, with little embellishment other than perhaps seasonal paraments (see Figures 25, 32, 37, 42, 57, 66).[7] While this style of pulpit might have made a less grand statement, the central locale and focus still served "to declare architecturally the indispensability of the Word" (Bruggink and Droppers 91). Other traditional church pulpits were more ornate, bringing beauty and interest to the place from which the Word is taught (see Figures 35, 67-68). This was an especially poignant visual statement; for "as much as good grammar in the proclamation is necessary, as much as actions of justice and mercy are necessary, so is the quest of beauty in the place of the assembly. None of these things will save us, but all of them bear witness to that which saves" (Wetzstein 14). Some of these pulpits included symbolism and/or imagery carved, painted, or otherwise crafted into their design. For example, the pulpit serving Kramer Chapel, Fort

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[7] Paraments, also known as altar cloths, are liturgical hangings used for adorning the altar, pulpit, and/or lectern, usually in colors and designs that indicate the season or festival period of the church.

Wayne, Indiana, bore a large crucifix on its side panel, graphically reinforcing Paul's

message of teaching "Christ and Him crucified" (see Figure 69). Another example was

Our Savior Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas, which had painted depictions of the means

of grace on its panels (see Figure 68). Additionally, many of these pulpits were

complemented by candles, or "torches," whether flanking the pulpit or off to the side (see

Figures 65-66, 68-69). The eye-catching effect of this special light to the place where

God's Word is proclaimed testified to the light of Christ: "Your word is a lamp to my

feet, and a light for my path" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Psalm 119.105).

Through the skillful usage of location, height, and design, these pulpits were able

to "preach" to the people. In so doing, the traditional churches nonverbally

communicated the pulpit's "sacred function. It is not a stand provided for a bit of oratory

but veritably the throne of the Word of God" (White, *Protestant Worship and Church

Architecture* 37). This was a bold profession of these churches' ideology, but not one

that the megachurch and its imitators seemed to likewise profess—revealed by their lack

of any fixed furnishing for reading/preaching the Word, let alone a pulpit.[8] Indeed, with

no pulpit or equivalent furnishings to be found on the sizeable stage of such a church to

provide a clue that a sermon, Bible lesson, or any sort of religious proclamation takes

place upon its expanse, one might just as easily expect a theatrical performance, musical

production, or motivational speaker to carry on a show. There was no visual

construction, no helpful imagery, no stage setting at all to prepare congregants for

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[8] As was the case with baptismal fonts, churches that had attempted to refurbish
and/or remodel their existing, more traditional sanctuaries to pattern themselves after the
basic theater style of the megachurch either removed, relocated, and/or significantly
downplayed their pulpit for reading/preaching.

receiving the Word of God. There was nothing to "give a sense of the divine-human encounter possible in preaching" (White, *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture* 46). There was no permanent, liturgical agent that might stand "as a continuous reminder of the Word of God," whether in use or not (Filthaut 62). So what *was* there? What message or mood was conveyed?

The absence of this historic liturgical component contributed to very different visual rhetoric than that seen in the traditional churches. First, the expansive stage, void of pulpit but full of lighting equipment, musical instruments, video screens, and props, spoke loudly of entertainment, *not* worship. Second, with an environment of entertainment comes the expectation of one or more entertainers showcasing their skill, not the expectation of a preacher sharing the Gospel. Thus, the visual rhetoric of the megachurch seemed to say that preaching is about entertaining, about the speaker's wit and inspiration for the sake of the "consumers" (Horton). This is at odds with the traditional churches, which seemed to understand that "preaching does not come about through the minister's personality and scholarship, though God uses these talents, but through God addressing His people in, with, and under the words of the preacher" (White, *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture* 36). Third, the absence of any permanent appointment for reading/preaching the Word of God, the lack of visual focus upon this vital part of ministry, the disregard for an opportunity to visually reinforce what the church is about seemed to impart a certain amount of indifference to the Scriptures and their elucidation. Not only is this approach in contradiction to the traditional churches but to the very Word of God: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My word will never pass away" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Matthew 24.35)—and a promise like

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this, out of the very mouth of God incarnate, "should move us to make it impossible to turn the chancel into a stage" (Horton).

So yet another liturgical factor, the pulpit, demonstrated the apparent dissonance between the two types of churches. On the one hand, the traditional churches remained faithful to the historic church, constructing an edifice that might create a worshipful mood, remind congregants of the transcendence of God's Word, and prepare hearts to receive the living voice of Jesus. The ideology of these churches seemed to be "preached" through this liturgical element, giving it "transparency of purpose": "The pulpit gives the deaf ears of a sinful world the precious message of redemption by Christ alone" (Klemsz 9). On the other hand, the megachurches and those churches similar in nature to them departed from the historic church, featuring a stage not a chancel, excluding the iconic element of a pulpit (as well as any other churchly indicator), and creating a mood expectant of entertainment not of worship. There was no "transparency of purpose" communicated within these churches, no allusion to being in God's house to receive His gifts through Word and Sacrament. Instead, these establishments portrayed such ambiguous multifunctional purpose that anything from a political rally to a theatrical performance to a rock concert might take place—but a worship service? The visual rhetoric certainly did not convey the latter possibility. Subsequently, the mystery deepens: how can the two churches coexist under the same expansive Christian umbrella when both baptism and preaching, key tenets of the Christian faith, are so antithetically depicted through the visual rhetoric of the two styles of churches? This is a pressing question that will be addressed in the conclusion of this thesis; however, there is still

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another essential liturgical factor to address before analyzing the entire gamut of the churches' architectural language.

Altar

The first explicit Biblical reference to an altar is in the account of Noah after the flood: "then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Genesis 8.20). Altars built to worship the one true God became symbolic of His presence at that site; for God said to Moses after the Exodus, "Make an altar of earth for Me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, your sheep and goats and your cattle. Wherever I cause My name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Exodus 20.24). The altar of the Old Testament was a place for the acknowledgement and temporal atonement of sin, a place for the affirmation of God's covenant with His people, a place for celebrating the fellowship between God and man, and a place for offering prayer and thanksgiving to God.

Then the prophesied Savior was sent from heaven above to be the ultimate high priest, the one who truly

> meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, He does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when He offered Himself. (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Hebrews 7.26-27)

After this "once for all" atoning sacrifice of God's Son, the altar of the New Testament became a place to receive the body and blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins unto

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eternal life, a place to affirm Christ's new covenant with His people, a place for

celebrating the fellowship between God and man, and a place for offering prayer and

thanksgiving to God. While parallels plainly exist between the altars of the Old and New

Testaments, one dynamic difference sets the two apart—instead of man offering

sacrifices to the Lord at the altar, it is now God offering the forgiveness and life that

Christ purchased and won at the cross: "I am the Living Bread that came down from

heaven. If anyone eats of this Bread, he will live forever. This Bread is My flesh, which

I will give for the life of the world" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, John 6.51). The

animals sacrificed on the Old Testament altar were but "types" or "shadows" of the

promised Messiah, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"; whereas,

Christ was the definitive sacrifice, the sacrifice to end all sin-atoning sacrifices

(Concordia Self-Study Bible, John 1.29). In other words, Christ was the fulfillment of

the Old Testament, just as church father Augustine taught: "The New Testament lies

concealed in the Old, the Old lies revealed in the New" (Schodde 303).

Since that time, the altar has been part of the historic Christian church: a

reminder of Christ, the sacrificial Lamb who was slain on the altar of the cross; a symbol

of the immanence of God—His physical presence with His people; and a place to

commune with the faithful, partaking in the Eucharistic meal for the forgiveness of sins.

Following in this custom, all of the traditional churches critiqued in this study were found

to feature an altar. While often vastly diverse in height, size, shape, design, and

adornment, all of these churches situated the altar in a prominent location, typically the

center of the chancel whether freestanding or affixed to a wall. The central placement of

the altar was a powerful statement in itself, a visual indicator of the importance of the

Sacrament that Christ Himself instituted the night in which He was betrayed:

> Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to His disciples,
>
> saying, "Take and eat; this is My body." Then He took a cup, gave thanks
>
> and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is My blood
>
> of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."
>
> (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Matthew 26.26-28)

The prominent position of the altar also served to remind congregants of "God's supreme

giving of Himself to man in the Christ, and the fellowship thereby inaugurated;" it served

to draw attention to the core of Christian worship, the partaking of His very body and

blood (White, *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture* 40).

In addition to placement, the sundry traditional churches used a variety of styles

in fashioning their altars to inspire congregants further. For example, some altars were

raised to a noticeable height by being mounted on a platform (see Figures 23, 32, 45, 59,

64-65, 71). Distinguishing the altar in this way made it natural, and even compelling, to

turn toward, singling it out as a place of considerable importance. Other altars were of

substantial size and material, the likes of which communicated the weightiness of the

sacred act performed at this liturgical center (see Figures 23, 38, 70-71). While the

predominant shape of these altars was rectangular, their accompanying altar rails were

typically situated either in a straight-line in front, or a semi-circle around, the altar (see

Figures 24, 42, 45, 58-59, 65). This feature beckoned the congregants to join in

fellowship with God and one another at the altar/table. Additionally, the "incomplete"

nature of the altar rails, in that they do not enclose the entire circumference of the altar,

made it easy to imagine the "angels, and archangels, and all the company of heaven" present just the "other side" of the altar/table.

The design of the altars in the various traditional churches was even more diverse, from simple to grand to everything in between. Many of the altars were very modest, both in material and design—"simple and yet noble, appealing by their form, yet transparent and readily understandable by the people" (Filthaut 37). Others, also simple in form, added a degree of decoration and symbolism in their design. For example, both the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles, California, and Our Savior Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas, rested their altars on the "wings of angels" (see Figures 70-71)—bringing to mind these heavenly creatures' continual song of praise to God: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Isaiah 6.3). Other altars were quite elaborate, standing ensconced in ornate reredos.[9] For example, both Shepherd of the City, Fort Wayne, Indiana, and St. Lorenz Lutheran Church, Frankenmuth, Michigan, had intricate reredos housing their altars (see Figures 23, 35). These altars were stimulating on a number of levels: their attention to beauty paid tribute to the Maker of all that is beautiful; their iconography illustrated the ideology of the church; and their grand scale seemed to remind one and all of the transcendence of God, while at the same time serving as the place at which the imminence of God is most felt—the partaking of His body and blood.

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[9] A "reredos" is a screen or partition wall behind an altar, made of any combination of materials, such as stone, wood, metal, or ivory. It is usually replete with renderings of religious icons or images, whether painted, carved, adorned in precious metal, composed of mosaics, and/or constructed with niches for statues.

The adornment of the traditional church altars typically included seasonal paraments to indicate the different liturgical seasons. Other common ornamentation included flowers and candles, both beautifying the altar/table and subtly calling to mind God's physical presence. Central upon many of these altars was an altar crucifix (especially if there was no other crucifix manifest), serving to remind congregants that it is "Christ and Him crucified" that makes the altar "the place for the sinner to hunger no more, dining on Christ's body and blood" (Klemsz 9). Most altars were otherwise unadorned, allowing their beauty, lines, and proportions to speak without risk of being overshadowed by clutter (O'Connell 203). However, whatever the adornment, whatever the design, whatever the style, the altars in the traditional churches used visual rhetoric to further enhance the lesson of God's great gift to humankind—"Christ and Him crucified," as well as to further emphasize the personal communion possible with Him in the partaking of His body and blood, a true "taste of transcendence."

In contrast, the visual rhetoric of the megachurch made no such confident declaration, no hint that the Sacrament of the Altar was even celebrated. For like the font and the pulpit, the third key liturgical factor of the historic church was noticeably missing. There was no focal point that might remind congregants of Christ's holy institution, no symbol of God's immanent nature through the physical means of bread and wine/body and blood, no place to assemble together in fellowship to partake in the Lord's Supper for the forgiveness of sins.[10] In this case, any statement made was by the

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[10] As was noted in regard to fonts and pulpits, churches that had attempted to refurbish and/or remodel their existing, more traditional sanctuaries to pattern themselves after the basic theater style of the megachurch either removed, relocated, and/or significantly downplayed their altar.

absence, rather than the presence, of any sort of altar/table.

> When one enters a church in which the communion table cannot be seen
> from the pews, there is certainly no visual indication that the Sacraments
> are considered of much importance. Visually, the implication is that they
> are of no account, whatever the church's real feeling may be. (Bruggink
> and Droppers 125)

The omission of this final liturgical factor further denoted the chasm between the traditional church and the megachurch: the traditional church placing great importance upon the Sacrament of the Altar as an integral facet of the Christian faith, the megachurch seemingly placing no importance on it whatsoever.

Overall, the manner in which the two styles of churches included or excluded the three key historic liturgical factors spoke to very different views of Word and Sacrament. The traditional church created a visual connection between the two, demonstrating that they go hand in hand—faith comes by the preaching of the Word; Word *and* Sacrament together sustain it: "as the miracles of Jesus' ministry were to strengthen the faith of those who heard His words, so the Sacraments of Jesus' present ministry are to strengthen the faith of those who hear the Word" (Bruggink and Droppers 125). The visual rhetoric of the liturgical elements in the traditional churches proclaimed how

> the Word made flesh comes to His Church. He comes to offer, present,
> and distribute all that He won for her on the cross. Through His chosen
> means, the risen Christ comes to bring life into a dying world. There can
> be no greater misunderstanding of the Divine Service than to deny or

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downplay the reality of Christ's presence and the purpose for which He is

present. (Wieting 68)

Through their liturgical appointments, the traditional churches graphically linked the

Word of God to the humble, ordinary means of water (baptism) and wine and bread

(communion)—the means of grace through which "Christ comes to bring life into a dying

world." However, the visual rhetoric of the megachurch did not reveal any connection

between Word and Sacrament, no suggestion of their significance, no sense that divine

Truth can reside in material "stuff," no allusion to Christ's presence.   In fact, the absence

of all three key historic liturgical factors, as well as the scarcity of emotive factors

discussed in chapter three, resulted in these edifices "reading" as something very

different than "church."

So what does it mean that one style of church "reads" like a church and the other

does not? What is the significance of the different atmospheres created by the two styles

of churches, the different emotions they evoke? What is indicated by the fact that the

ideology manifested in the two styles of architecture differs so greatly? The concluding

chapter will endeavor to answer these questions, as well as provide a summary of the

implications of this thesis for theology, for the churchgoer, for architecture, and for

rhetorical theory.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This thesis is a study of architecture, specifically Christian church architecture

across the United States. It is *not* a study of the preaching or profession of faith espoused

in churches; rather, it is an investigation into how church architecture may induce a link

to the spiritual. In the course of this research, two distinct categories of church

architecture emerged, the traditional church and the megachurch—each with its own

unique interpretation of church design and furnishings.   But which style of church

architecture generated a stronger connection to the divine?   Upon careful consideration

of all the elements discussed in the previous chapters, this thesis comes down on the side

of the traditional church for myriad reasons. On the whole, the architecture of the

traditional church was shown to have significantly greater capacity to teach nonverbal

lessons of the Bible, to move one toward the sublime, to incorporate the liturgical

elements by which the means of grace are distributed, and to remain faithful to the

historic Christian church as established by God Himself in accordance with the Biblical

record. Subsequently, this visual "link to the spiritual" provided parameters by which to

theorize on the potential "soul" of each type of church.

Thus, this thesis is also a study in how the visual rhetoric of a church building and

its appointments speak to the doctrine and practices of those who gather within. In other

words, it is a deliberation on what the "exterior," the visual, might convey about the

"interior," what is preached and professed. In this regard, all of the visual trappings of the megachurch and those following in its paradigm nearly shouted that they are *not* cut from the same cloth as the historic Christian church, indeed that they are *not* of the same spirit (Concordia Self-Study Bible, 2 Corinthians 11.4). For though the nature of this thesis has focused on what is visually preached versus what is orally preached and thus cannot claim to "know the heart" of those in either style of church, it has also established that the visual has great power to communicate that "content."

Using ideological criticism as a lens to examine the visual rhetoric of church buildings and their appointments uncovered the dominant ideologies visually expressed in church architecture, as well as the ideologies muted in it. This method of critique revealed that the visual rhetoric of the traditional church espouses an ideology centered on Christ and His gifts; whereas the visual rhetoric of the megachurch espouses no particularly religious ideology; in fact, it was noted to mute references to Christianity and focus instead on what appeals to the world. Using Longinus on transcendence as another way to critique the visual rhetoric of church art and architecture demonstrated how the design and features of the traditional churches imparted a glimpse of the sublime, a little "heaven on earth," and facilitated congregants in their spiritual journey; whereas the megachurches kept congregants firmly rooted in the things of this world, with no visual link to the spiritual. Therefore, the conclusion of this analysis is that the nonverbal language of the two different styles of churches suggests that they are also two different religions—one following in the footsteps of the historic Christian church, remaining true to the Word of God, and declaring humanity's need of the Savior; the other veering away

from the historic Christian church, tempering the Word of God, and catering to the "felt needs" of society.[1]

To support these conclusions, this final chapter will first review how and why the art and architecture of the traditional church have greater capacity to connect congregants to the things and person of God than that of the megachurch. Next, an explanation will be provided in regard to how inferences about the doctrine and practices of the two styles of churches can be made by "reading" the visual rhetoric of the spiritual connection established via their buildings and appointments. Finally, the implications of this thesis for theology, for the churchgoer, for architecture, and for rhetorical theory will be examined and some suggestions for future research will be proposed.

<u>The Link to the Spiritual</u>

The Bible testifies that in the midst of leading His people through the wilderness to the Promised Land, God gave Moses and the Israelites *very* specific directions to build a tabernacle, a portable sanctuary where God could dwell amongst His people. Great attention was paid to every detail: height, width, materials, colors, furnishings, fabric, et cetera (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Exodus 26-27). Later, when the people were established peacefully in Israel under the reign of King Solomon, the temple was commissioned—with no expense spared in building the permanent house of worship in line with God's tabernacle "blueprint" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, 1 Kings 5-7). Vast amounts of gold, silver, bronze, cedar, iron, and precious stones went into the

---

[1] The term "felt needs" refers to the perceived temporal problems and needs of an individual, "needs" felt differently at different times, depending on the emotional state and circumstance of the individual versus the eternal problem of sin and death that spans all humanity and has only one solution, Jesus Christ.

construction of God's house—to His greater glory. Some five hundred years later, under

the reign of Herod the Great, a much larger temple was built on the same spot the former

had resided, replete with huge courts that eventually led into the Holy of Holies. Why

did God, and subsequently His people, have such intense interest in the architecture of the

church? Because it was "to tell the people something about God. The structure in which

[they are] to worship is to be an aid to God's message. It is to be, in fact, a part of that

message" (Bruggink and Droppers 133).

The structure, the furnishings, the ornamentation, and even the layout of this, the

earliest of churches, were lessons for the eyes: "On each one of its concentric walls, the

priests could read the word translated and manifested to the eye, and thus they followed

its transformations from sanctuary to sanctuary, until they seized it in its last tabernacle,

under its most concrete form, which still belonged to architecture: the arch" (Hugo bk. 5,

ch. 2). Not only was their place of worship full of visual instruction, but the Israelites'

daily lives as well, in that the whole of the Bible is full of accounts where visual

remembrances of acts and events were set up to teach and remind the people about God.

For example, in accordance with God's command,

> Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan.
>
> He said to the Israelites, "In the future when your descendants ask their
>
> parents, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them, 'Israel crossed the
>
> Jordan on dry ground.' For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before
>
> you until you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan just
>
> what He had done to the Red Sea when He dried it up before us until we
>
> had crossed over. He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might

know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always

fear the Lord your God." (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Joshua 4.20-24)

From the earliest times, religious symbols abounded in the lives of God's people,

reminders of His presence, His work, His promises. While some signs changed with the

coming of the Savior, the rite of circumcision to the rite of baptism, the sharing of the

Passover meal to the sharing of the Lord's Supper, the lessons remained constant—God's

saving grace bestowed upon His people. The signs and symbols were, and still are,

points of conversation and/or elucidation about the faith for both the "symbol savvy" and

those unschooled in even the most basic of Christian symbols.

> Humans are predisposed to visual stimulation. It is little wonder that we
>
> reach for those things that can be seen in order to understand and represent
>
> the many unseen things that form the foundations of faith and belief. God
>
> as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; the Devil and his work; and the concept of
>
> salvation are outside of anything we can express in words. We seek to
>
> render what we know of these things in words, but it is often images
>
> that fully describe and quickly communicate these things. (Berkbigler and
>
> Creed 24)
>
> Contemplation of aspects of God's nature beyond our immediate
>
> comprehension can be encouraged through the incorporation of
>
> symbolism. Richness and abundance of symbolism and visual articulation
>
> can highlight God's transcendence. Symbols can point to more abstract
>
> theological understandings (such as God's "otherness," the Trinitarian

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nature of God, and God's sovereignty), providing opportunities for

prolonged consideration by the viewer. (Torgerson 4-5)

Thus, Christian images and architecture act as visual rhetoric, teaching the ideology of

the church and aiding in the transcendental process of inspiring faith. "Art and

architecture participate in the sacramental order of the church, translating into action the

liturgy of Word and Sacrament, becoming witness to the Christian and the world"

(Klemsz 9). And if the Creator Himself saw fit to use these means to excite the senses of

His people, does His creation, humanity, now think to have a new and better way to do

things?

That seems to be exactly what this thesis has revealed about the megachurch and

its imitators. They appear to have abandoned the use of fixed, visual "tutors," which

reflect Christian ideology and create an atmosphere of reverence, reflection, or ritual. In

their place are large projection screens, which suggest the megachurches' preference for

quickly passing video images that titillate rather than inspire any *depth* of reverence,

contemplation, or meditation. Indeed, these churches are completely ahistoric in their

design, with no referents speaking of their past, no allusion to the foundation of their

faith. There is no visible homage paid to Word and Sacrament, no sense of their

significance. The visual rhetoric of the building and appointments of the megachurch

demonstrate no understanding that

Liturgy is word and event, word and narrative, word and imagination. Or

if left to its words alone, never broken open, never visualized, liturgy can

be heard and spoken, but never seen. It will be less evocative then, this

imageless liturgy of words, less engaging to the young, less real. To place

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the liturgy in its aesthetic, biblical and often narrative context maximizes

its impact and enhances its memorability. (Nadasdy 199)

As revealed in Biblical record, God, the Architect of the universe, created a world

full of amazing sights to behold and creatures with the sensory perception to appreciate

them. Throughout history He chose physical means to communicate to His people, using

the "physical" to help articulate the "spiritual," things like circumcision/baptism, the Ark

of the Covenant, the temple, the Passover/Eucharist, and most poignant of all, God

incarnate—God becoming flesh and blood to live and die for His children. In other

words, matter matters. "The visual arts have the power to trigger our ability to

comprehend, to understand and remember" (Schmidt 18). There is a synergistic

relationship between the spoken and written Word and the art and architecture of the

church. Indeed, "to deny the importance of our material space, our architectural design,

and the symbolism of the furniture, is implicitly Gnostic" (Horton).[2]

In contrast to the megachurch, and in deference to the Master Architect's

penchant for the visual, the traditional church appears to have patterned itself much in

keeping with His "blueprint" for corporate worship. In other words, the churches within

this category used both art and architecture as "aids to God's message." The wide array

of symbols they integrated reflected their Christian ideology, visually teaching the things

of God. The environment they fostered helped to instill a sense of the divine, facilitating

a transcendental journey. Their focus on the three liturgical centers, font, pulpit, and

altar, illustrated the importance of Word and Sacrament, emphasizing the means of grace.

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[2] In simple terms, Gnosticism is the cult conviction that matter is evil and that
salvation comes only through special knowledge. As such, it denies the incarnation of
the Son of God, Sacramental realism, and the resurrection of the flesh.

Overall, the traditional church followed God's example of using the "physical" to help articulate the "spiritual." This is not to say that every church adhering to this paradigm used these elements as abundantly (or moderately), as effectively, or as prudently as God may have established in His Old Testament archetype or might like to see in His church today; rather, it is to assert that the churches in this paradigm are historic in their basic design and endeavor to be part of the never-changing message of God.

Additionally, what is seen in the megachurch and its imitators is architecture reflective of the entertainment or business realm, not the religious realm. Inside and out, this style of church is more akin to an office complex, theater, shopping center, or even college campus than a house of worship. The megachurch and its imitators seemed to have divorced themselves from all things sacred. In their effort to appeal to the secular world, they have too fully embraced that world and become a parody of church, overly concerned with being "trendier than thou" (Armstrong). They have created a "false choice between emphasizing either evangelism of the unbeliever or discipleship of the faithful. Both are essential components of authentic Christian living. To address only one or the other creates a distorted vision of the faith" (Torgerson 203).

Perhaps the reasoning behind the megachurch paradigm is that by having a "neutralized" worship space, the unchurched might not "read" anything overtly religious into the space and thus not hesitate to give church a "try." In an article examining the megachurch trend, Pastor George Rauscher of Faith Community Church, West Covina, confirmed this thinking: "Malls are a neutral place and people feel comfortable in malls. So when people come into our church, they will say, 'Here's a familiar place. I feel safe

and secure here like in a mall'" (qtd. in Vrana). However, this reasoning is faulty in a number of ways.

First, there is no such thing as truly "neutral" space; something is always being communicated and/or perceived. For example, the mall that Rauscher claims to be neutral is designed carefully and cleverly to promote sales, "specializing in the strategic marketing of things people don't really need" (Cronon 196); their "spatial arrangements express[ing] a single motif calculated to captivate visitors while at the same time disguising the mall's primary purpose, which is to get consumers to buy" (Williams 123). Malls are products of the "Gruen Effect," a theory that suggests "shoppers will be so bedazzled by a store's surrounding that they will be drawn—unconsciously, continually—to shop" (Hardwick 2). Much like gambling establishments, many malls have an intentional "disconnect" to the outside world so that shoppers will lose a sense of time—and spend more time and money shopping. Additionally, the floor plan, the interior flow, the décor, the architectural detail, and other factors are all engineered to promote consumerism—to entice patrons into a world where they are sovereign, a sovereignty that requires malls to adjust to consumers' interests and desires, or risk losing their business. If this concept is what the megachurch is modeling itself after, is it likewise adjusting to the interests and desires of its "consumers," allowing *them* to be "sovereign"? Since God is both sovereign and immutable by nature, how can a church be "seeker sensitive" and still remain true to His nature and teachings? It cannot; it is God who chooses how to manifest Himself.

> God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose
> the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly

things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—

to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him. It is

because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us

wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

Therefore, as it is written: "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord."

(Concordia Self-Study Bible, 1 Corinthians 1. 27-30)

Second, while such "neutral" space may appeal to the unchurched, it does not

connect with the body of believers. There is no *visual* environment that engages the

congregants, no sense of tradition, no Christian ideology expressed, no transcendent

journey encouraged.

Even as Christ was flesh and blood and the signs and seals of the

Sacraments are real bread and wine, [water and Word], so the unity of

Christ's Church must have visible expression in the flesh and blood of this

world. The tangible elements of the Sacraments should impress upon the

Church Christ's demand for the tangible unity of His people, even as it

should impress us with the reality of our connection with the Lord.

(Bruggink and Droppers 208-209)

Without the essential ingredients of the historic Christian church, the emotive factors that

serve as Bible lessons for the eyes and a glimpse of the sublime for the soul, the liturgical

factors that demonstrate the immanence of God and distribute the means of grace, "mere

buildings in which members meet will be constructed and labeled churches" (Bruggink

and Droppers 558). Additionally, without these ingredients, an opportunity to teach and

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strengthen faith is lost, as "the combination of spoken and written language with gesture and physical object is synergistic, a very special way of knowing" (Schmidt 18).

Furthermore, the practice of the church assimilating to the norms of the world to appeal to the unchurched is not a Biblical one:

> While we try to entice the world to come to church to hear the Gospel, the New Testament proclaims a powerful church worshipping God going out into the world in order to reach the lost (cf. The Book of Acts). True revivals have historically proved again and again, if they prove anything at all, that a revived and healthy church reaches a dying and lost world through its own awakened people. (Armstrong)

In other words, it is not about the church conforming "to the pattern of this world" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Romans 12.2). Rather the body of believers, fortified on the Word and Sacrament received in corporate worship, go out into the world to evangelize through word and deed to everyone, everywhere—sharing with them the Good News of salvation and inviting them to church where they, too, may receive the life-giving Word and Sacraments of Christ.

Thus, no assertion is made that the only environment for preaching and teaching the Word of God is in a particular style of church building or even in a building at all. Jesus and His disciples frequently taught in the marketplace, in the countryside, in people's homes, by the waterfronts—anywhere people were gathered. As noted in chapter one, early Christians met wherever possible (and wherever safe when subject to persecution), whether in a shop, cave, or home. Throughout early American history, traveling ministers would meet in schoolhouses, hostelries, or tents to preach and

establish new parishes. Still today, large religious convocations assemble in a variety of

venues for special speaking engagements, conferences, programs, and evangelism—

places like hotel ballrooms, sports arenas, mountain retreats, and the like. However, the

common end goal of these particular Christian preaching and teaching avenues has been

to bring those they reach into the church body, into corporate worship—where they might

receive Word *and* Sacrament. Yet the megachurch and those following its example

> are currently trying to make the church the tent in order that they might
>
> reach the "seekers." They assume that what is important is that new
>
> people should come to church. As a result, they fail to see that the more
>
> important question should be, does the church to which they are coming
>
> worship God truthfully? (Hauerwas 208)

A church engrossed in trying to evangelize "seekers" by metamorphosing into something

that might appeal to them may be compromising the faithful character of Christian

worship and its "truthful witness of the church to the world" (211).

Third, with no "transparency of purpose," observers tend to equate what is seen

with their own experiences—and what experiences do most people equate with the high-

tech lights, video screens, staging, and music equipment so predominant in the

megachurch? Entertainment, whether a concert, play, motivational speaker, movie, or

other performance. Yet, is entertainment what religion is supposed to be about? Is it not

supposed to be about Divine action rather than human action?

> The accent falls not on what we are doing (even if it is more godly than
>
> pure "entertainment"), but on what God is doing. When we meet, it is not
>
> to hear the preacher lecture, entertain, cajole, or inspire us, but to hear God

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address us through His minister. We come not to enjoy the special music, but to receive God's saving promise and the benefits of Christ's work through the Supper and to respond in grateful thanksgiving. (Horton)

A space bare of Christian icons and liturgical centers but full of entertainment paraphernalia speaks not of this Divine activity for the eternal salvation of all but of human activity for the momentary pleasure of some.

Lastly, in striving so arduously to market Christianity toward the unchurched (at the expense of that which has historically defined the church), the megachurch and its imitators have crossed the line between "being in the world" but "not of the world."[3] The challenge of "being in the world" but "not of the world" is not new; since the time of the disciples, Christians have endeavored to be a light to the world while not succumbing to its perils. For example, when the apostle Paul addressed the Athenians on Mars Hill, he used their altar to the "Unknown God" as a means to introduce the God of the Bible; however, he did not compromise the truths of God in doing so—in fact, his commitment to those truths alienated some, while still gaining others as followers (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Acts 17.16-34). Yet, overly concerned with the need "to make Christianity attractive, or acceptable, to its 'cultured despisers,'" the megachurch and its imitators seem to have gone too far in using the things of the world, outwardly pandering to human desire and departing from the ways of God (Armstrong). They removed from the sanctuary that which might "offend," things that convey the history and Sacramentality of Christianity, and substituted that which might gratify, things that convey luxury and pleasure. In regard to these "seeker sensitive" churches, theologian David Wells asked,

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[3] See John 17:13-19; Romans 12:1-2; 1 John 2:15.

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What is it that we're trying to attract "seekers" to? Is it a sanctuary

worthy of a Broadway production? An auditorium mimicking a

convention center, with lighting from Vegas, with shows that would be

worthy of Vegas? Is this what we are attracting them to? Do we think

that they are going to be attracted by big numbers and glitz? Is this what

it's about?

No, it is about "Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles"

(Concordia Self-Study Bible, 1 Corinthians 1.23). A bloody Jewish man on a wretched

Roman cross is indeed "offensive," but when that individual is God incarnate suffering

for the sins of the world, it is the most supreme act of love and the means by which the

lost are saved. In contrast to the "unattractiveness" of the cross, "big numbers and glitz"

are without doubt more attractive to the natural man. Yet if this kind of "hype" is

reflective of the doctrine and practices of those within this style of church, the simple

saving truth of the Gospel may be getting lost in the fervor.

<div align="center">Inferences about Doctrine and Practices</div>

So then how does the virtual *absence* of any religious art or architecture,

combined with the *presence* of an environment of entertainment, speak to the doctrine

and practices of the megachurch and its imitators in contrast to the traditional church,

which abounds in religious art and architecture and provides an environment of worship?

For all intents and purposes, the visual rhetoric of the megachurch and its imitators is

anthropocentric (human-centered); whereas, the visual rhetoric of the traditional churches

is theocentric (God-centered). Where one has stadium seating with cupholders for

comfort and pleasure, the other has wooden pews with kneelers for piety and humility;

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where one has an expansive stage with concert equipment and lighting for the gratification of the audience, the other has a sanctuary with pulpit, altar, and font for the distribution of the means of grace; where one instills a sense of worldly wonders, the other instills a sense of Divine dynamism. "A human-centered theology will regard worship as our activity, for God, each other, or ourselves. Consequently, it will demand architecture that borrows from the entertainment or business world. Instead of calling us out of the world to 'sing a new song,' it will perpetuate our old identity" (Horton). That "old identity" is humanity's fallen nature, which originated with Adam and Even, who craved to "be like God" and thus chose man's will over God's—the original sin that brought death into the world and the first example of theocentricism succumbing to anthropocentric desire.

According to the preaching of the apostles, God became incarnate and made Himself known to humanity through the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem humanity from sin and death; accordingly, true theological understanding of God is not only theocentric, but more specifically Christocentric (Concordia Self-Study Bible, John 5.23, 17.3; 1 John 2.23, 5.12). Jesus taught, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you really know Me, you will know My Father as well" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, John 14.6-7a). It was Christ who established baptism for the forgiveness of sins and for the salvation of the world (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Matthew 28.18-20, Romans 6.3-5, 1 Peter 3.20-22). It was Christ who commissioned His followers to preach the Gospel to all creation (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Luke 24.44-47; Mark 16.15-16). It was Christ who gave His body and blood as the new testament for His people (Concordia Self-Study Bible, 1 Corinthians

11.23-26). To worship the true God apart from Christ is not possible; there is *no* other

path to the Father (Concordia Self-Study Bible, John 14.6b). To worship Christ apart

from His Word and Sacraments is not possible; Christ *is* the Word made manifest, His

Sacraments the means by which His gifts are received. Indeed, "the chief worship of the

Gospel is to wish to receive remission of sins, grace, and righteousness"—which is

achieved through Word and Sacrament (Augsburg Confession art. 3, pt. 189). In the

traditional churches, Word and Sacrament are graphically present, via font, pulpit, and

altar, but noticeably absent in the megachurch and those similar in nature. What might

these differences visually communicate in regard to the doctrine and practices of each

style of church?

The megachurch is like Naaman, the well-respected, mighty warrior of the Bible

who was plagued by leprosy. After a young serving girl told him there was a prophet in

Samaria who could heal him, he hastened to the man, Elisha, to be cured of his affliction.

However, when Elisha sent a messenger to pronounce that the cure was to simply wash

seven times in the Jordan, Naaman was indignant. He expected Elisha to come out

himself and perform some miraculous spectacle, not to be told by a servant to wash in an

ordinary river (Concordia Self-Study Bible, 2 Kings 5.1-14). Likewise, the megachurch

and its imitators seem to discount the simple means of grace and instead seek after the

spectacular, with their high-tech equipment ever at the ready to spotlight whatever might

unfold upon the stage. Yet, as Naaman learned when he finally heeded the word of the

prophet, it is the simple, God-inspired things that hold the power to heal the sick—just

like it is the simple liturgical acts (carried out via the liturgical centers of font, pulpit, and

altar) that hold the power to heal the sinner. With God, it is substance over style; this is

not to say that He does not use signs and wonders but that He uses them to teach and

strengthen His people, as well as to bear witness to the salvation of man through Christ

(Concordia Self-Study Bible, Hebrews 2). Furthermore, He uses simple means, Word

and Sacrament, to do amazing things—the deliverance of man from sin, death, and the

power of the devil. He does not use signs and wonders to entertain or bedazzle; in fact,

Jesus warned that "false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and

miracles to deceive the elect—if that were possible" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Mark

13.22).

Being anthropocentric, and thus catering to the "felt needs" of the people, is

antithetical to Biblical Christianity; that is to say, such focus on pandering to the "felt

needs" of fallen, natural man lends itself to a religion of narcissism rather than a religion

of self-denial and dependence on Christ for salvation from the sinful self. Biblical

Christianity is not about catering to the desires of self, but denying self and following

Christ, who Himself came not to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom for

many (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Matthew 16.24, Mark 10.45). Indeed, adhering to the

Word of God is often far from accommodating to human desires. For example, the Bible

speaks extensively of believers suffering for Christ's sake: ridicule, ostracism, division

amongst loved ones, physical persecution, and even death. The Bible also condemns

what is sought after by the world—riches, power, fame, et cetera, and commends what is

lowly in the eyes of the world—meekness, turning the other cheek, servitude to others, et

cetera. Most importantly, the Bible teaches that it is Christ alone who saves, not Christ

plus something else. So how can a church satisfy "felt needs" and still remain true to

Biblical doctrine when, like Naaman, human nature abhors suffering but craves

possessions, power, and prestige, as well as clings to the notion of "self-help" (even in regard to salvation)? It cannot; a church that attempts to be "seeker sensitive" and consequently adapts to the ever-changing whims of a fallen race compromises the never-changing truths of the one true God. "Indeed, the drive to meet 'felt needs' can mask the real need that the truth of the Gospel addresses—alienation from God" (Armstrong).

Christ came to be the sin-atoning sacrifice so that the world might no longer suffer alienation from God, but become the dear children the Heavenly Father so desired to gather to Himself.   Yet in seeking the lost, Jesus never pandered to the "felt needs" of those to whom He ministered; He was not "seeker sensitive." For example, the Gospel of John recounts how many followers after Christ wanted to make Him a "bread king" when they saw the miracles He could perform; they wanted Him to meet their "felt needs" of food, health, and prosperity. However, Jesus was not "sensitive" to what they "*sought*" but to that which they *needed*—the Bread of Life, which could only be found in Him. That was *not* what the multitudes wanted to hear, and many turned away and no longer followed Him (Concordia Self-Study Bible, John 6). What Christ provides is eternal life through Him, not just the temporal fulfillment of earthly needs. Thus, the apparent anthropocentric (man-centered) nature of the megachurch is in conflict with this Biblical example of Christocentrism set by Christ Himself.

This thesis is not arguing that megachurches have no power to persuade, only that trying to "market" God by tempting the eyes and tickling the ears of would-be followers is not the Biblical model. Genuine Biblical teaching does not kowtow to "felt needs"; rather it is without fail God-centered, sin-exposing, and life-altering. Jesus Himself spoke of worshipping in truth: "True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and

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truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, John 4.23b-24). Christocentric worship must always have Christ at the forefront, teaching His truths, distributing His gifts, proclaiming His glory. There should be no question of His transcendent or immanent nature, no uncertainty of His sacrificial love, no confusion of His means of grace. Yet, visually speaking, none of these things is readily asserted in the building and appointments of the megachurch and its imitators. A church should be "a work that adds depth to our understanding and helps us to remember the great things which God has done for us" (Schmidt 20). Yet, the visual rhetoric of the megachurch and its imitators contributes nothing that might add to understanding or remembering the things of God; in fact, it is often conflicting and disconcerting (with their environment of entertainment and concupiscence for creature comforts). The people of God "cannot afford to ignore the importance of theology in building a church. Neither can we afford to be ignorant of the traditions which we as the Church represent" (White, *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture* vii). Yet, the megachurch and its imitators have ignored theology in their structures and have neglected the historic church traditions. Furthermore, just as "the heavens declare the glory of God; [and] the skies proclaim the work of His hands," the church building and its appointments should extol Him (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Psalm 19.1). Yet, the art and design of the megachurch and its imitators seem to pay more homage to man and his ability than to God and His glory, further demonstrating the anthropocentric nature of these churches.

This thesis is also not arguing that megachurches fail to fill a particular "need." The apparent success in numbers, income, and renown attests to the fact that many people

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are indeed attracted to this style of church. However, if, as outlined in this chapter, the visual rhetoric of the megachurch paradigm aptly indicates a departure from the historic Christian church and an inclination toward anthropocentrism, then whatever "need" is being filled is likely more human in nature than Divine. Subsequently, it may be that this style of church caters to a less religious audience, one desiring something more social than doctrinal, more trendy than traditional, more high-tech than low-tech, more self-focused than other-focused or Christ-focused. However, if this is indeed the case, then it supports the assertion of this thesis that the megachurch is not only a new genre of church, but also one potentially professing a different religion. Just as Christ taught what His followers *needed* to hear and learn, not what they necessarily *wanted* to hear, so true Biblical Christianity teaches the whole Word of God, not only that which might suit the "felt needs" of an unchurched or less religious audience. Accordingly, a church that "bends in the wind" to the fleeting desires of its assemblage rather than standing by the eternal truths of the Bible may not be a true Christian assembly.

On the other hand, the traditional church is like another warrior of the Bible, the centurion from Capernaum whose servant was deathly ill. Gravely concerned for his servant, the centurion sent some Jewish elders to request of Jesus that He come and heal his servant. But before Jesus arrived, the man sent word that he did not want to trouble the Lord, especially as he was unworthy to have Jesus come under his roof, but that if only Jesus would give the word, the servant would be healed. Jesus honored the centurion's request, marveling at his faith (Concordia Self-Study Bible, Luke 7.1-10). Unlike Naaman, the centurion did not expect the Lord to come Himself and perform some miraculous spectacle, but humbly trusted His simple, but powerful, word to heal—

and heal it did. Likewise, traditional churches seem to cling to the unadulterated Word

and Sacraments of Jesus and their power to save through His Divine dynamism. as

demonstrated by their focus on the liturgical components of font, pulpit, and altar. They

have none of the entertainment-oriented trappings of the megachurch that might indicate

that Word and Sacrament is not enough or that they need to seek after the spectacular to

augment the simple means of salvation. Rather, the traditional church is all about Christ

in His Word and Sacraments.

Being Christocentric, and thus remaining faithful to the Word of God, is the

definition of true Christianity. Overall, the traditional church has this focus prominently

proclaimed in its art and architecture. Unseen is the concentrated effort of the

megachurch to make the house of God "user-friendly" or "relevant" to the unchurched;

instead, an effort to enfold whomever enters, the believer *or* unbeliever, in the things of

God is evidenced by all that is seen in the traditional church. Both the transcendent and

immanent natures of God are readily made manifest in the emotive and liturgical factors

utilized throughout the traditional church. The visual rhetoric of the traditional church

aids congregants in understanding and remembering the things of God, whether it is a

Bible story told in stained glass, a promise of God communicated in liturgical

components. an aspect of God seen in soaring heights, or the suffering Savior on a cross.

The traditional church boldly declares Christian theology in its architecture and sings the

praises of God; indeed, it serves as a "sermon in stone."

Accordingly, the conclusions of this thesis, grounded on the visual rhetoric of

each style of church, maintain that not only is traditional church architecture more likely

to induce a link to the spiritual, but that the traditional church is more likely to have

doctrine and practices of a Christocentric nature, which is in keeping with the historic Christian church and the Word of God. In contrast, the architecture of the megachurch and its imitators create little to no link to the spiritual; in fact, the visual rhetoric of this style of church speaks more of the worldly than of the Divine. Subsequently, the megachurch and its imitators, regardless of whatever the true "heart and soul" of those within may be, seem more apt to offer doctrine and practices of an anthropocentric nature, which is a departure from the historic Christian church and the Word of God.

Implications and Future Research

So what does this mean for theology, for the churchgoer, for architecture, and for rhetorical theory? For theology, this thesis reveals how "just as liturgy is theology in action, so architecture is theology in material structure" (Bruggink and Droppers 23). Accordingly, long before a church is ever built, those commissioning the project should think long and hard about how their building might communicate their faith visually. Do they want a building that will announce their theology to the world and thus be more likely to promote synergetic harmony between the oral and the visual? Or do they want a building that will mute any theological connotations and thus likely run the risk of incongruity between the oral and the visual *or* have such an orally neutral message as to be in synch with the visual (and consequently compromise Christian doctrine at least in part)? For architecture is not silent; regardless of what the actual profession of faith may be of those within a church, the building *will* communicate something. The art and design of a building *will* form expectations in those "reading" its rhetoric, whether consciously or unconsciously—so what do those commissioning a church want to say?

It is true that since Old Testament days, there has not been one particular size or style of church architecture commanded by God; however, this thesis demonstrates that the historic Christian church, in its faithful practice of proclaiming the Word and administering the Sacraments, has deemed that whatever form a church may take, it should be determined by and expressive of the theology of those who will gather within; "basically, the church edifice must receive its form from its significance and purpose as a house of God" (Filthaut 21). This is especially important as Christ and His gifts are the focal point of Christianity, and without both manifest, the church is incomplete. Therefore, without careful forethought and theological concern, "mere buildings in which members meet will be constructed and labeled churches" (Bruggink and Droppers 558).

For the churchgoer, this thesis presents a cautionary tale—the moral of the story perhaps being "what you see is what you get." The church should be more than a "mere building in which members meet." It should be a place of refuge, a place to commune with God, a place to receive the gifts He promises; it should be a place that "reveals the character, theology and values of a community" (Cuthill). In turn, the potential churchgoer "reads" the visual rhetoric of such places of worship—what they profess, which sacred acts they cherish, and how they interact with God. The individual can either look to a church that has substance, physically manifesting the things of God through emotive and liturgical factors, maintaining the traditions of the historical Christian church, and providing an environment that is compelling, celestial, and comforting, or the individual can look to a church that has style, boasting high-tech video, audio, and lighting equipment, featuring a "see and be seen" environment, and promising an extravaganza extraordinaire. However, if the adage of "what you see is

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what you get" is true, choosing the former will likely embrace the individual in

Christocentrism—the belief that saves because it has as the object of faith the saving

death and resurrection of Jesus on behalf of sinful man; whereas choosing the latter will

likely ensconce the individual in anthropocentrism—a belief that condemns because it

has as the object of faith the sinful, mortal human being, not the Incarnate God, Jesus

Christ. So being forewarned is being forearmed; in other words, understanding that the

language a church building speaks is indicative of the doctrine and practices of the people

within allows the individual to make a more informed decision in regard to what church

to attend.[4]

For architecture, this thesis provides insight into just how much can be

communicated through the art and design of a building. It is not only select buildings,

such as memorials and churches, which have the potential to communicate or to

persuade; it is any and every building. Something is always being communicated and/or

perceived; thus this critique should give pause to those unconcerned or untutored in this

concept. Without this "tool" in hand, buildings might be erected that conflict with the

desired image of those in residence. Likewise, without understanding the power of visual

rhetoric in architecture, a valuable avenue to create a specific mood, promote a specific

message, persuade a specific audience, or teach a specific lesson may be lost. As has

been established in the course of this research, people are irresistibly affected by their

surroundings—lighting, color, scale, spatial dynamics, furnishings, and the like can all

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[4] This is certainly not to say that one can base the orthodoxy of a church solely on what is visually perceived, only that one can discern much about a church from what is conveyed visually. One should always "test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (Concordia Self-Study Bible, 1 John 4:1-6.)

influence the mood, receptivity, expectations, and comprehension of an individual. Understanding this concept opens the door to endless possibilities. For knowledge is power, and the knowledge that architecture has a "voice" is the power to command an audience.

For rhetorical theory, this thesis demonstrates how architecture is part of the growing body of visual rhetoric. In *On the Soul*, Aristotle asserted, "The soul never thinks without a picture" (bk. 3, pt. 7). In keeping with this concept, there has been a move to critique the visual for its rhetorical significance: performances, photographs, art, advertisements and cartoons, political propaganda, and more recently, architecture, especially memorials. This research establishes churches as another architectural genre capable of providing a picture for the soul to ponder. In fact, as two distinct categories of church architecture emerged, the traditional church and the megachurch, this thesis contributes two unique genres to the field for further research and study—one, the architectural tradition of historic Biblical Christianity; the other, a venture into something new that not only reflects cultural shifting away from traditional Biblical Christianity, but in many cases actually engineers and shapes a new church culture, perhaps to appeal to a changing world. Furthermore, this critique illustrates how architecture can be persuasive. It is not only verbal rhetoric, but visual as well, that can be employed for effect, subsequently making it persuasive. For example, the traditional churches' concentration on the liturgical elements promotes and persuades the churchgoer that they are indispensable to the Christian faith. Another example is the ability of a church building and its appointments to move one emotionally (pathos), affecting a response from, and

relationship with, those thusly inspired. Accordingly, this study not only helps architecture be construed as rhetoric, but opens the door to its persuasive possibilities.

This thesis, critiquing the rhetoric of Christian church architecture, is only the beginning of a much lengthier discussion. What about "liminal" churches—those Christian churches that suffer an "identity crisis" by being in "limbo" between the traditional and megachurch paradigms? How does such visual contradiction in their buildings and appointments speak to their doctrine and practices? Additionally, there are many other related areas of research that might be explored. For example, what effect might choir placement have on the visual rhetoric of a church? Might there be different messages being conveyed in those that situate the choir up front versus those that situate the choir in back? What about the diverse apparel of Christian church leaders? For what purpose do they wear what they wear in the church service? What does their apparel communicate? Furthermore, this research has focused on Christian architecture, but what might the architecture of other religious edifices have to say? For that matter, what might any other collection of structures have to say: malls, banks, office complexes, restaurants, amusements parks, et cetera? All of these are intriguing areas of research, ones which the growing field of *visual* rhetoric can shed much light upon, especially as "a picture is worth a thousand words."

Equally intriguing, but in the more established realm of *verbal* rhetoric, is the possibility of extending this research and pursuing a study of the preaching and profession of faith espoused in the two different styles of churches. Persisting in this vein would add even greater depth to the current analysis of the churches' visual rhetoric— either solidifying the conclusions made herein or demonstrating the limitations of making

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inferences on the visual. Also of interest is the phenomenon of the megachurches' inextricable association to their leaders. In other words, what might it mean that within the megachurch paradigm a particular church is synonymous with its particular leader? Does it indicate a shift from pastor as one who "speaks for God" to pastor as celebrity? Additionally, with so many churches broadcasting their services, or at least sermons, via one medium or another, how might the lack of audience immediacy impact the message? Furthermore, an exploration of the different types of music in churches would be of significant interest, especially with the current trend of some churches to sport a "rock-n-roll Jesus" platform. How have lyrics and melodies changed in these churches? What do the changes communicate? How well do the lyrics jibe with the tune?

It is clear that there are still many rhetorical avenues to explore, but as for true Christian church architecture, this thesis has shown that its greatness is rooted in Christ, the ultimate source of inspiration for all of its art and architecture. It is timeless, remaining true to the unchanging, inscripturated Word and saving ways of God and offering stability in an ever-changing world. It anchors itself in the immutable things of God, manifesting them both visually and verbally, and holds steadfast to the Biblical paradigm that "the church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord."

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