

40th

Anniversary Issue

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THE INTERFAITH JOURNAL ON
RELIGION, ART AND ARCHITECTURE
VOL. XL • NO. 3, 2007 • ISSN 00147001



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Faith & Form : The Interfaith Journal on Religion, Art and Architecture is independently published four times per year by Faith and Form. Copyright © 2007 by Faith and Form, 1737 Kenyon St. NW, Washington, DC 20010. Third Class Postage paid at Washington, DC. Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of Faith and Form.

Manuscript Submission: The editor is pleased to review manuscripts for possible publication. Any subject material relevant to religious art and architecture is welcome. Good visual material is emphasized. Articles may be submitted on disk along with hard copy or emailed to: mcrosbie@faithandform.com. Manuscripts, disks and photos will not be returned unless specifically requested and a return envelope with sufficient postage is included.

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CONTENTS

40TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

Houses for Worship: Emerging Trends

By Richard S. Vosko 6

Reflections and Projections

By Edward Sövik; David Wilson; Elizabeth Farrelly; Henry Stolzman; Steven J. Orfield, Ellen F. Davis, Ashraf Salama, Talitha Arnold, Richard S. Vosko, W. Joseph Mann, Maurice N. Finegold, John Wesley Cook, Joseph Malham, Michael B. Lehrer, Michael Landau, Annie Dixon, John Giuliani, Judith Dupré, Duncan Stroik, Lawrence Cook, Barbara Chenicek, Thomas Fisher, Paul A. Harding, E. Crosby Willet, Sharif Senbel, Rod Teissere Stephens, Charles J. Hultstrand, Victor F. "Trey" Trahan, Michael Berkowicz, Craig Rafferty, Lawrence J. Madden, William J. Conklin, John Collier, James C. Childress, Carol Frenning, Frances Halsband, Elizabeth Devereaux, Douglas Hoffman 11

New Exploration in Sacred Building

By James Thomas Hadley 39



ON THE COVER:

Symbols of faiths around the world reflect the interfaith nature of *Faith & Form*. The 18 faiths symbolized include, from left to right, starting in the top left corner of the cover: Christianity's Cross; Judaism's Star of David; Hinduism's Omkar; Baha'i Faith's Nine Pointed Star; Islam's Star and Crescent; Pagan Sun Cross; Taoism's Yin and Yang; Shintoism's Torii; Early Christian Fish symbol; Jainism's Swastika; Sikhism's Khanda; Slavic Neopaganism's Hands of God; Jainism's Hand; Ayyavazhism's Lotus; Neopaganism's Triple Goddess; Christianity's Maltese Cross; Buddhism's Wheel of Dharma; Russian Orthodox Cross. After the 18 symbols were chosen, we discovered that the number 18 in Judaism is *chai*, which means "living."

Cover design by Dave Kuhar.

DEPARTMENTS

Editor's Page	4
Artist/Artisan Directory	47
Architects Directory	49
Just One More Thing	51

INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

Bendheim	5	Rambusch Lighting	46
Botti Studio of Architectural Arts, Inc.	46	R. Geissler, Inc.	51
C.M. Almy	9	Rohlf's Stained & Leaded Glass	46
FORM/REFORM	52	Schuler Shook	19
Homecoming, Inc.	4	The Duke Endowment	51
J. Sussman	38	Willet Hauser	2
Meyer Vogelpohl	46	Yale Institute of Sacred Music	38

OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNCERTAINTY



EDITOR'S PAGE ★ MICHAEL J. CROSBIE

Growing up in my Roman Catholic household, I remember a magnet on our refrigerator that stated the core of my family's religious belief: "God said it, I believe it, that settles it."


I always found the finality of that motto to be anything but settling. Isn't that assuredness the root of what shapes the dangerous world we live in today? Bombings (suicide and otherwise), kidnappings, terrorism, torture, genocide – all are insanely destructive means that human beings employ to express the certainty of their belief, religious and otherwise. The thesis of Christopher Hitchens's recent book, *God is Not Great*, rests on his unshakable belief that organized religion has ultimately done more harm than good to the human race. He is certain of it. That settles it.

If we have learned anything about ourselves, our religions, our art, and our architecture, it is that certainty is a dead end. The possibility that we might be wrong, might learn something new that would invite us to reconsider a long-held belief, or might find liberation in changing our minds—all of these "opportunities for uncertainty" keep us alive and growing. Uncertainty thrives in the soil of humility. It is cultivated in a climate of knowing that we cannot know everything.

This is the standard that *Faith & Form* has always upheld. And this is why we have invited many different people of various faiths and experiences to contribute to our 40th anniversary issue. *Faith & Form* does not present a unified front, an authoritative body of unquestionable expertise. We offer the contents of this anniversary issue as homage to those who

founded the journal in 1967 to be a forum for debate, speculation, and discovery. *Faith & Form* has always been an interfaith publication because ideas and viewpoints that cut across faith traditions reveal connections between them. Read the essays in this issue and you will hear themes drawn from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish faiths, all grappling with the same challenge of expressing belief through the prosaic elements of stone, wood, paint, bronze, thread, and glass. The materials of the world are summoned to give form to the otherworldly.

Our contributors' essays are framed by two longer articles. In the first, Richard Vosko takes account of the social, historical, and religious movements in our culture that are driving the transformation of sacred art and architecture. He contends that increasingly the current generation of believers wants places of worship that can be part of their lives every day of the week. This captures the essence of the notion that our religious buildings are built of "living stones," made of the believers themselves.

James Thomas Hadley's article offers a view of the future of sacred art and architecture that pushes further into new materials, design vocabularies, and radical ways of constructing. He believes that we must engage art and architecture in the spirit of the Gothic enterprise, creating out of contemporary chaos new religious environments that do not flinch in the face of competing world views and images of God. Will this new art and architecture be strong enough to allow us to live within different communities of faith with "an inquiring and discerning heart," as the *Book of Common Prayer* implores us? The next 40 years will tell. 

MICHAEL J. CROSBIE IS THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF *FAITH & FORM* AND CAN BE REACHED BY EMAIL AT MCROSBIE@FAITHANDFORM.COM



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HOUSES FOR WORSHIP: EMERGING TRENDS



BY RICHARD S. VOSKO

What factors give architectural and artistic shape to church buildings in the U.S.: tradition, style, response to current events? Do they have anything to do with religion at all? Identifying emerging trends in architecture for worship is not an easy task. The winds that blow the state of religion in the U.S. are very strong and unpredictable. Old religious institutions are struggling to maintain identity, while new ones are not yet firmly established. What are some of the recent shifts in religious attitudes in this country? What internal issues do religious groups struggle with? And what are the emerging trends in church design? For purposes of brevity this article focuses on the Christian tradition, but the transitions are being experienced in both the Jewish and the Muslim faiths as well.

SHIFT IN NATIONAL RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES

We could start by critiquing the latest church designs in the U.S., ranking them on just how well they inspire people or by discussing them in terms of scale, proportion, materials, colors, beauty and how they function. Instead, my intention here is to explore how emerging styles of church buildings, if they can be identified at all, are the results of various non-design-related issues. The factors that contribute to emerging trends in church design are far more complicated.

The gradual migration away from organized religion in the United Kingdom, Ireland, and the European Union over the past several decades is now slowly and steadily taking hold in the U.S. It should be noted that although most people claim to be members of a particular religion, producing exaggerated percentiles, the drastic detachment from regular worship and, presumably, other church-related activities, is what is most noticeable. For example, Churchgoing in the UK, a survey taken by Tearfund (tearfund.org), a British Christian charity, found that 53 percent of people in Great Britain call themselves Christian but only one out of ten attends church weekly.

The Barna Research Group (barna.org) is one agency in the U.S. that has been tracking America's religious behavior and beliefs since 1984. It reports that one out of every three adults (33 percent) is classified as "un-churched": they have not attended a religious service of any type during the past six months. This exodus did not occur overnight.

In my opinion, the long-term reasons for this measured departure include but are not limited to the following strange bed-fellows: the end of the Cold War, family planning, nation-wide restlessness, a blurred definition of the separation of religion and state, and internal religious conflict. My assumption is that the overarching reason for people's rejection of mainline religious practice has to do with their wanting to have more control in making decisions about their lives. This rejection is coupled with the inability or unwillingness on the part of some church leaders to respond to daily-life issues in ways that actually make sense. It

is amazing that religions that maintain strict rules and regulations about personal moral affairs have managed to coexist as long as they have with citizens who, generally speaking, take pride in "rugged individualism." Could it be that there is a collective fickle relationship with organized religion because of a capitalistic mentality and its accompanying marketing strategies? In this case religion would be treated as a mere commodity, where it is used until it breaks or is no longer required or applicable. Yet, as we shall see later in this article, some of the fastest growing religions in the U.S. are, in fact, significantly affecting how people make decisions about their personal lives. Here are the factors that, I believe, have caused a slow but certain shift in religious attitudes in the U.S.

END OF THE COLD WAR

The end of the Cold War helped reduce the subliminal fears U.S. citizens had of being attacked by the Soviet Union, thus eradicating some underlying tensions in everyday life. One imagines in hindsight that personal prayer offered some consolation during the Cold War, with the hope that God would stop the Russians from using the atomic bomb. Something similar happened after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Places of worship in all faith traditions were packed with standing-room-only crowds during the weeks immediately following the attacks, but no longer today. Does this mean that people seek God and turn to religion only when circumstances warrant divine protection or intervention? Or, does it suggest that most people want their professional religious leaders to offer them consolation in times of national tragedy before they go back to tending to their own lives?

Another factor that might have slowly affected the role of religion in people's lives began in 1944 when the Servicemen's Readjustment Act (the GI Bill of Rights) made it possible for veterans of war to go to school. Having a high school or college degree would increase the opportunities for better jobs and higher incomes, more lifestyle choices and, in short, enhanced independence. For some, having more money and possessions prompted acts of thanks and praise directed toward God. On the other hand, financial freedom and education along with a craving to be successful in life could also have started to draw people away from the pulpit and the communion table. Their sustenance was no longer found only in the consolation offered in worship, but in material goods, human companionship, and civic security. Some might argue against this observation in view of statistics that show relatively high church attendance figures then as compared with today.

FAMILY PLANNING

The use of advanced birth control methods (such as the pill, since 1960) provided women and men with greater control over their reproductive lives. This was important in establishing independence from the whims of nature, not to mention from religious instruction. The opportunity to plan the number of children in a family made it possible for women to continue to develop their own identities and careers outside the home. For Catholics, the 1968 Vatican instruction on human life would prove to be too much of a restriction, causing a departure among not only the laity but also the clergy, who could not honestly preach the party line to the faithful.

RICHARD S. VOSKO, PH.D., HON. AIA, A CATHOLIC PRIEST FROM THE DIOCESE OF ALBANY, HAS BEEN A DESIGNER AND CONSULTANT FOR WORSHIP ENVIRONMENTS IN NORTH AMERICA SINCE 1970. HIS NEW BOOK, *GOD'S HOUSE IS OUR HOUSE: RE-IMAGINING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR WORSHIP*, HAS WON THE FIRST PLACE AWARD IN THE LITURGY CATEGORY FROM THE CATHOLIC PRESS ASSOCIATION OF THE U.S. AND CANADA.

NATIONWIDE RESTLESSNESS

Perhaps the ultimate test of faith among U.S. people occurred during the 1960s when the country was forced to deal with a senseless and unwanted conflict in Southeast Asia at the same time it was mourning the assassinations of public leaders on the home front. The U.S. was collectively restless, confused, divided, and afraid. Anti-authority movements raced through college campuses and into the public arena, challenging anyone who had anything to do with government and big business or with education and religion.

Also in the 1960s, the tireless efforts of reformers were celebrated with the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibited discrimination of all kinds on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin. Later, in 1972, women's rights were upheld as Title IX of the Education Amendment prohibited sex discrimination in all education programs receiving federal support. These laws, however, did not completely eradicate racial and sexist bigotry and discrimination, which continue to exist today.

While the government was being tested by acts of civil disobedience, riots, and protests, major religions struggled to figure out whether their doctrines and catechisms any longer provided a calming effect or even made sense to the faithful. Ironically, whether or not every congregation was sympathetic, many religious leaders were pro-active in rallying their communities against the war, poverty, sexism, and racial prejudice.

RELIGION AND GOVERNMENT

One development now affecting all religions in the U.S. is the way some politicians in the Democratic and the Republican parties have exploited biblical texts and religious doctrine in crafting political rhetoric and party platforms. Politicians are employing faith-based argumentation and initiatives to appeal to voters on contentious issues like abortion, birth control, euthanasia, stem-cell research, same sex marriage, evolution, and global warming. Their rhetoric has divided not only members of major religions but also the general public into camps: left and right, liberal and conservative. Even the national election process has divided the entire electorate into red (conservative) and blue (liberal) states.

The discourse on the place of religion in public affairs is evident in the titles of best-selling books such as: *God's Politics* by Jim Wallis, *Is Religion Killing Us? Violence in the Bible and the Quran* by Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* by Sam Harris, *The God Delusion* by Richard Dawkins, *Failing America's Faithful: How Today's Churches Are Mixing God with Politics and Losing Their Way* by Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, and *American Fascism: The Christian Right and the War on America* by Chris Hedges – to name just a few.

The situation on the national scene is aggravated by the intramural struggles in some religious denominations. These factors will contribute to the empty-pew situation being experienced especially in the main-line religions. This flight will eventually affect the architectural design of church buildings.

RELIGION'S INTERNAL TENSIONS

At the same time civic unrest held the U.S. captive in the 1960s, Christian religions were embarking on an adventure called ecumenism. For example, prompted by the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), the Roman Catholic Church would begin to experience a significant transformation on a global level. I mention it here not because I am Catholic but because this Council was an ecumenical gathering of leaders and scholars, one that would affect the way major religions understood their relationship to each other and to the worldwide community. While the world was turning upside down, looking perilously small and fragile in the eyes of

cosmonauts and astronauts, major Christian religions themselves began struggling with their own identities and slow transformations. Thus, the time-honored role of religion to provide a stable and calming effect during troubling and tremulous times was also in jeopardy.

The most notable change prompted by the Council was experienced in the worship practice of the Catholic Church. Plumbing centuries of scriptural, archeological, and liturgical scholarship, the Mass (Liturgy of Eucharist) was completely changed. This reformation would also reach into the worship patterns of some other Christian religions. Shared resources helped to distinguish what different religions historically held in common and what would foster further contemporary collaboration. These efforts would result in a sequence of dialogues between religions that continue to be both fruitful and frustrating. Key worship-related issues centered on doctrines pertaining to baptism and Eucharist as well as to ordination, ministry, the role of women, scripture, language, and ritual studies. These reforms continue and are now being informed by issues such as acculturation, feminism, and the arts. But ecumenical relations between the World Council of Churches and the Catholic religion began long before the Second Vatican Council – at the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1910.

One facet of religious life that would be affected by these ecumenical collaborations was the environment for worship. If worship patterns were changing, if new music and ritual books were being written to guide the liturgical practice of a congregation, what would happen to church buildings designed in a different age? Although some of the more doctrinal issues would occupy quiet conversations among scholars, the people in the pews would now begin to notice modifications being made in their own sanctuaries. Some congregants would not be pleased with these physical changes or with the collaborative efforts associated with ecumenism. They would fear a loss of identity.

Over the past 40 years some of the compelling questions pertaining to church buildings have focused on what would have to be done to old and new places of worship in order to accommodate redefined church polity and revised rituals. Would the new environments satisfy the desire of the faithful to be more involved in all aspects of church life, including worship? And how would these “modern” places of worship honor centuries of tradition while implementing change? The struggle for a new religious identity in the modern world continues to be fueled by issues that are dangerously divisive within the religious family.

The search for a spiritual side to life has not been entirely addressed by the emerging liturgical or ecumenical reforms just mentioned. There is indication of a growing ennui with the multitasking lifestyle pace and the materialistic pressures that seem to dominate the U.S. population. Many people appear to want consolation and solidarity in their search for sanity and sanctity rather than the isolation they find in the lonely commutes that shape their workday. They are seeking a sense of security within a community framework that is based on shared fundamental principles, and they want their religious leaders to affirm them and support them in that search.

What people expect from their religion now, if anything, are contemporary answers to perplexing questions about life, success, suffering, and death. What is helpful to these seekers is a religious message that makes sense to them in plain talk. What is not welcomed is rhetoric from the pulpit that treats the congregants as if they were totally incapable of thinking for themselves. During this popular search for spiritual direction little help appears to be coming from many mainstream preachers. For centuries the Christian Church, like other faith traditions, has exerted a strong hold on the way people live. Unambiguous moral and spiritual direction is what people expected and received from religious leaders. Many polls now reveal that although this nation considers itself to have



Interior of the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles. Architect: Rafael Moneo and Leo A. Daly.

strong religious roots, something divine or supernatural in the hallowed halls of organized religion is difficult to find. Maybe this is why *The Da Vinci Code* by Daniel Brown has captured the imagination of so many people. It is now apparent in the U.S. that science, medicine, education, technology, literature, music, and the arts continue to shape people's lives at the same time some religions are losing the autonomous power they once had in developing the socio-ethical-cultural environment in which people live. This may be a neo-Enlightenment period of history, where religion is given a back seat in determining priorities in people's lives.

While most successful global corporations have long eschewed top-down authoritative and hierarchical models, many religious leaders still cling to outdated management systems for fear of losing power and control over their congregants. Tensions between clergy and laity are exacerbated by the recent, much-publicized incidents that have occurred in some religions. For example, the pedophile scandal in the Roman Catholic Church has created a lingering suspicion about anything promulgated by Catholic authorities. Groups like Voices of the Faithful and Call to Action challenge church leaders to honor the principles of collegiality established at the Second Vatican Council by giving lay members more involvement in church governance. These movements are balanced somewhat by other common-ground initiatives that attempt to provide a rationale for bringing religion back into the public arena with a new kind of authority that is not entirely dependent on old-world privilege and status. In other words, in order to be successful, a religion cannot rest on its laurels.

The Episcopal Church in the U.S. is in the midst of an intramural battle over the ordination of gays and lesbians who live with partners, to the rank of bishop. The issue has spilled over into the worldwide Anglican Communion as the more conservative members seek to establish independent parallel churches. Other mainstream denominations, usually stable during times of transition, also seem to be wrestling with similar issues: how to adapt to diverse contemporary situations without forsaking tradition.

In the midst of this religious maelstrom one religious group seems to be gaining some strength: Protestant Evangelicals. These Christians are establishing a moral presence not only on the national political scene but also in the local town hall and...in courtrooms. The leaders in this far-reaching denomination have managed to recognize the issues that are preoccupying the minds and consciences of U.S. citizens, and have found effective ways to address these concerns. The agendas of the Evangelical platform have forged into the halls of Congress and even into the Presidential office, diluting the once treasured separation of religion and state in this nation. This brand of religion has spawned innumerable independent congregations throughout this country. They meet in diverse settings ranging from storefront churches to shopping malls to gigantic, Big Box megachurch buildings. The impact is redefining not only religion but also what a church building looks like.

So far I have attempted to list some of the obvious and the not so apparent causes for changing religious attitudes, which, I maintain, will eventually have an effect on the design of church buildings. Rather than impersonal religious rhetoric people want understanding. Instead of blueprint theology people want relevant direction in their lives. Rather than formality people want a sense of hospitality. "Once-a-week religion" is not enough. People want access to their churches 24/7 for other programs. And, during worship, there is a desire to participate fully, not merely as a spectator at a sporting event. For some, old rituals and worn-out religious symbols have lost their savor and are considered less important than shelter, comfort, and basic amenities. What model of worship or governance is reflected in newer places of worship? And, conversely, how does the design of a sanctuary empower congregants to

be pro-active in their religions and in the public arena?

My premise is that the major ingredients for new church designs are found not in the ingenuity of the designer or architect but in the collective narrative of the congregation. How does the design of a church building respond to the stories, the experiences, and the desires of the members who make up the community?

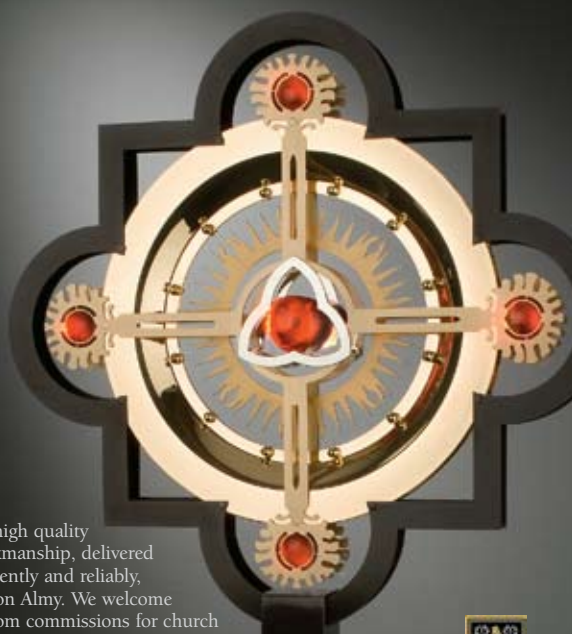
EMERGING TRENDS IN RELIGIOUS DESIGN

In the January 2007 issue of the *Church Business Magazine* (www.churchbusiness.com) RaeAnn Slaybaugh compiled a list of "trends" in the church construction business. She drew on the advice of several planning and building professionals who were identified in the article. Here follow the emerging forces now shaping environments for worship, as identified by Slayburgh.

Facilities for Youths:

The common denominator in the successful religions is the concerted effort to design programs and events for all youths. Religious leaders believe that such activities will attract families and will reflect the investment that the religion is making in younger generations, tomorrow's members.

Structures are being designed not only to house educational settings but also to be places where teens, especially, can "hang out" – snack bars, game rooms, and play areas. There will also be rooms for administrative and counseling ministries. Obviously, not all congregations will be able to afford or sustain structures or staffs dedicated solely to youth ministry. In these places, there will be an emphasis on sharing available space within the facility. In some instances, a congregation may work out an arrangement to share spaces with a neighboring institution.




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All-Purpose Centers

Ideally, new places of worship are planned to accommodate a variety of events that can occur simultaneously. Congregations with smaller buildings are planning for total flexibility so they can use the largest room for not only worship but also conferences, education, and even recreation. Nearby commercial kitchens are used to serve suppers in the same area. Designing such an all-purpose facility will require flexibility (in terms of lighting and acoustics) and durability (in terms of materials). Energy conservation has also become a priority, especially in buildings used all day throughout the week. Further, ample storage spaces, often overlooked in planning, are essential.

In some religions the idea of a flexible, all-purpose space is synonymous with a place that is not conducive to the worship of God. On the other hand, many of the newer Christian denominations are less worried about appearances or ambience. For them the high priority is hospitality and how effectively the worship service and other programs address their search for something spiritual in their lives.

Good Neighbors

Building a new place of worship is not as easy as purchasing property and pitching a tent. “Not in my backyard” has become the standard rallying cry of many homeowners in suburban communities who do not want to see a religious building erected nearby. The neighbors, rightly, want to know about the ramifications of a construction project in terms of environmental impact, traffic, and the strain on infrastructure. Increasingly, more local and statewide code and zoning requirements lengthen the building process and add to the cost of the project.

The design of a new building is also an important concern. If the structure’s materials, style, landscaping, and exterior lighting complement the neighborhood they can be significant factors in winning the support of the wider community. Additions to existing buildings can sometimes end up “squeezing” more architecture onto a site designed for less. The presence of religious buildings in a neighborhood can be a good thing, and can add to its market value, if collaboration among all parties involved is established early in the project.

Renewing Existing Places

The condition of the worship space is important in keeping members and attracting new ones. Some newer denominations believe that branching out to other sites will help spread the mission and attract more members. Lately, however, there is some evidence that congregations are deciding to sit still and invest in the property they have by expanding and repairing what they own. Religion is a competitive big business and consumers do shop around looking for the best service. Although it is usually more costly to embark on a renovation project than it is to build new, for some congregations the best solution is to enhance existing buildings. This is especially true in some downtown neighborhoods where real estate is more valuable. A decision to add on to existing facilities will require careful attention to the style of the addition as well as to how much it encroaches on the neighbors.

Something Old, Something New

It is apparent in many new Christian places of worship that little or no emphasis is placed on religious symbolism. Typically, there are no steeples, crosses, or art glass windows, and the interiors are plain. Some places of worship then look more like athletic arenas, auditoriums, concert halls, or convention centers. In brief, the Big Box style of architecture so apparent in the malls and in stand-alone stores like Wal-Mart and Home Depot has influenced the shape of religious build-

ings. There is an advantage: these buildings are cheaper and quicker to erect. The disadvantage is that they may not last as long as a building designed with durability and longevity in mind. The new Roman Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles was designed “to last 500 years!”

But now there appears to be a new appreciation for some distinguishable style. Of course, this is what postmodern architecture was intended to do – add some classical touches to places that were bland and utilitarian but not so pleasing to the eye. The attachment of decorative elements, however innate to the form, will continue to be just that, veneer. Once again the question must be asked: How well does the architectural statement reflect the narrative of the existing faith community?

Although in some Protestant Evangelical congregations there is no rush to incorporate traditional elements into the design of the church, some mainline religions continue to value the assumption that a church must “look like a church.” Apparently, when it comes to describing what a church is supposed to look like, church architectural styles inherited from Eastern and Western Europe still occupy the imaginations of some second- and third-generation Christians.

According to some building professionals, there also appears to be a longing among some clientele for constructing more intimate settings for worship and fellowship rather than huge stadium-style meeting halls, and that these places should be designed with some of the traditional elements of religious building at the same time they take advantage of modern construction and energy-saving techniques. All in all, the expense of building a place of worship continues to grow.


Rising Costs

No doubt the cost of real estate, building materials, and labor has affected the market. Many congregations are forced to construct in stages. They also require buildings that can be expanded when more revenue becomes available. This cautious approach means that master planning and fundraising must be considered in tandem. What are the compelling reasons for embarking on a project? What is the mission of the congregation? How well do existing facilities aid the congregants in carrying out their mission? What is the long-term vision for the community? Will the current mission or identity of the group change in the near future? What is needed now? And, how much can the congregation afford to construct now?

Designs for Building Community

Probably the most telling trend in the design of places of worship is the incorporation of amenities that will build community. As I have noted before, the traditional elements once found in religious architecture are not now perceived as significant elements in church design. Although the mainstream religions will maintain a strong sense of symbolism, the newer Evangelical churches are concentrating on creating a sense of community. It is not unusual to find a bookstore, a coffee shop, or even a restaurant in some of the larger megachurches.

There are other issues that congregations in the U.S. must be concerned about in the design of future places of worship. That list includes an unpredictable economy, stewardship for the environment, energy conservation, care for historic religious buildings, and support for the arts.

Church buildings in the U.S. are changing because attitudes toward religion and religious practice are changing. Some religions are shifting gears in order to address the demands of a fast-paced and sometimes morally confused society. Others are standing still or, in some cases, retreating to the past in an effort to find a way to survive what is obviously a time of major transition. 

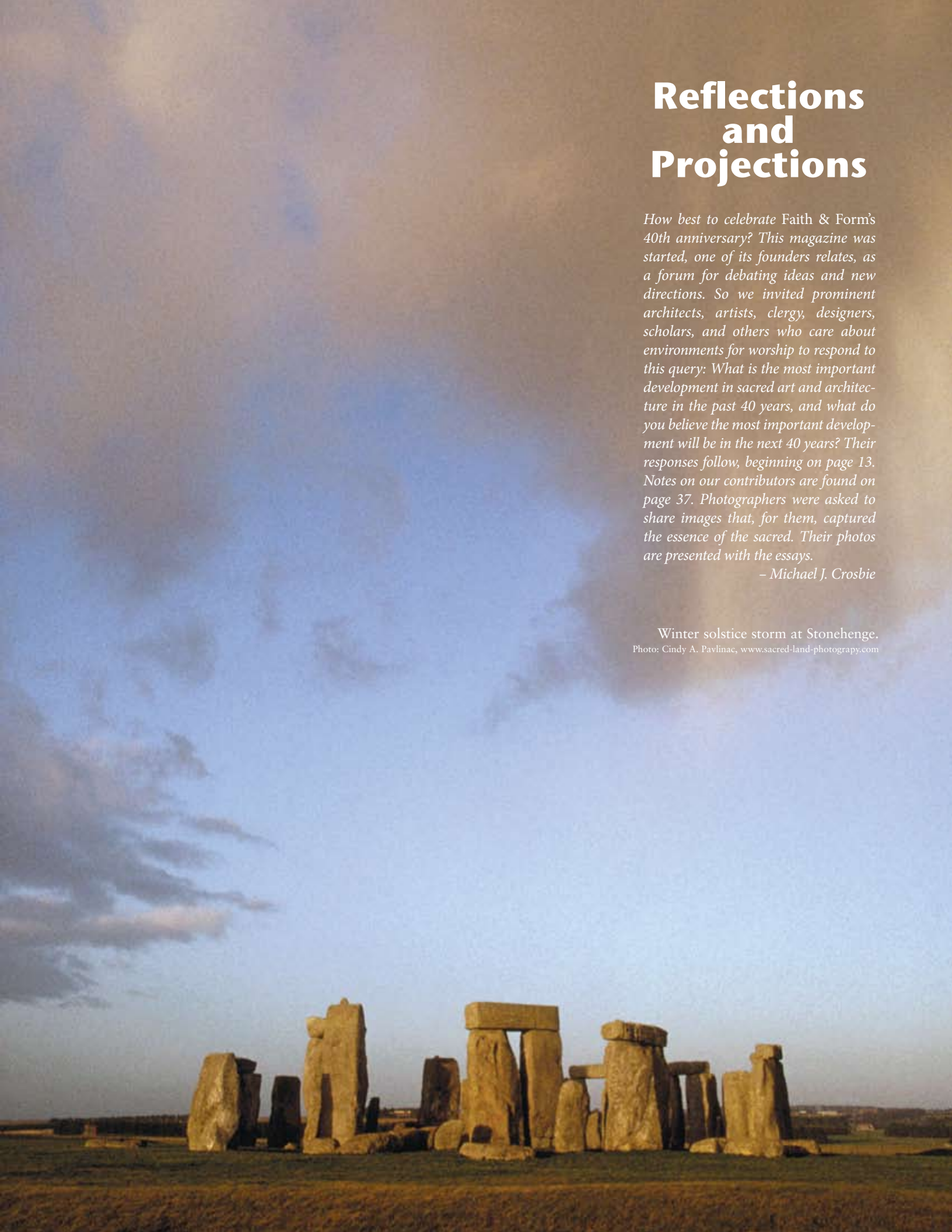
Reflections and Projections

How best to celebrate Faith & Form's 40th anniversary? This magazine was started, one of its founders relates, as a forum for debating ideas and new directions. So we invited prominent architects, artists, clergy, designers, scholars, and others who care about environments for worship to respond to this query: What is the most important development in sacred art and architecture in the past 40 years, and what do you believe the most important development will be in the next 40 years? Their responses follow, beginning on page 13. Notes on our contributors are found on page 37. Photographers were asked to share images that, for them, captured the essence of the sacred. Their photos are presented with the essays.

– Michael J. Crosbie

Winter solstice storm at Stonehenge.

Photo: Cindy A. Pavlinac, www.sacred-land-photography.com





Nantucket Congregational Church, Nantucket, Massachusetts.

Photo: Steve Rosenthal

Beginnings

When *Faith & Form* was born there was a strong residual of the optimism that suffused the country after World War II. The directors of IFRAA (the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art, and Architecture) of whom some were holdovers from the Church Architecture Guild and the Guild for Religious Architecture, assembled in the small conference room of the Dupont Circle Building in Washington, D.C., for their quarterly meeting. The agenda focused on the thought that if IFRAA was to serve valid purposes seriously, something in print would be important. There were then close to a dozen English-language periodicals relating to the architecture of religion, none of which satisfied us. We were ourselves not of one clear mind. We didn't compose a mission statement; perhaps we were fearful.

We agreed immediately that the proposed journal should be called *Faith & Form*.

We agreed that church and synagogue buildings should be "modern" and need not

be monumental. We agreed to aim at breadth, against formulas. We hoped the pages would be full of discussions that would approach resolution of the uncertainties that perplexed building committees and architects.

We assumed that the obvious concern was to be the design of shelters for liturgical assemblies. But we recognized that such buildings were not the full range of the architecture of faith, that faith could be on exhibit in "secular" architecture. We agreed that the differences among denominational structures were clear, but the intent to define the differences was not important; the desire to find commonalities was. We probably all would have agreed that truth and beauty and goodness (read "service and function") were basic to the forms of faith. And we thought the magazine should help us deal with the basics.

There was a broad variety of men around the table, and we were fond of each other. There were good men there: Bob Durham of Seattle,

who would soon be elected president of the AIA; Milton Grigg, the amiable and wise AIA director; Harold Waggoner, who had most of the million-dollar church design projects then current; and others, some of whose names I, regretfully, have forgotten.

We were ready for action. We agreed to proceed, and by the session's end donations adding up to \$1,500 were on the table for Ben Elliott, who volunteered to undertake the business management. Someone proposed me for editor; I consented to lead the editorial committee and suggested that Dorothy Adler, our secretary, be designated managing editor.

How do I know about these earliest hours of *Faith & Form*? I was the chairman at the table when the 40-year adventure began. And what has changed? Many things, but maybe not too much. The hope and the struggle are still there, and in them still are stimulation and exhilaration, are there not?

Edward Sövik, FAIA

Creeping Conservatism in Church Design

From my perspective, one of the most important developments of the past 40 years affecting sacred art was in the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II. I was fortunate, in the 1960s and the early 1970s, to work with liturgical designers Bob Rambusch, Willy Malarcher, and Fred Christian who were involved with the resulting remodeling of a number of projects where a certain open-mindedness on the part of the client seemed to prevail. Some quite astonishing commissions, for the time, were completed. One of my aims was to try to parallel in glass the fine art "minimal" movement in painting and sculpture. The idea was that art with a capital A could hold an inherent "sacred" quality appropriate to religious structures. I recently received an interesting

request for the meaning of the iconography of some windows done in the 1960s for a church in upstate New York. I wrote to explain that concept but never received a reply.

There was also, at that time, the beginning of a move towards the practice of commissioning individual artists for glass art design rather than depending on generic studio options. (Large studios would have as many as four or five designers on staff who were expected to draw up anything and everything.) Artists such as Robert Sowers and Robert Pinart were early exponents of individual design. The studios were recognized as the fabrication resource.

Currently I sense a creeping conservatism, less openness, in Roman Catholic church

design and I do wonder about what sacred art and architecture really are, what makes a space compelling, uplifting, transporting, awe inspiring. Certainly much religious art and architecture fails in that respect, where certain secular buildings succeed. Years ago a visit to Kevin Roche's Ford Foundation building in New York put that into perspective for me.

The most important and urgently needed development in the next 40 years will be a viable planet. Somehow, what we hold most sacred, our Earth, needs to prevail over how we live. The unbelievable unfolding of environmental crises has the potential to render art, architecture, religion, and human life irrelevant in our corner of the universe.

David Wilson

Household Gods

The last 40 years – the baby-boomer years – have shifted Western society from wild postwar optimism to epidemic "affluenza," obesity, and depression. Over the same period our sacred architecture, eviscerated by populism, consumerism, and the collective solipsism that lets us remake God in our own, increasingly infantile, image has been systematically stripped of all that smacks of transcendence, poetry, or mystery. Anything, that is, that makes us feel small.

All around us, old stone churches with angel-headed hammer beams, hand-carved pews, and Gothic spires are torn down and turned into air-conditioned apartments while their congregations, like self-flagellating hermit crabs, take up low-ceilinged residence above some greasy spoon or tax agent across the road. Even cathedrals get the domestication treatment, their altars and rood screens dragged out, their pews reorganized around some central, human

focus, their purposeful axiality trampled on, and their sacred gloom-filled crevices hosed out with artificial light.

It's as though, having decided that religion is God's chance to make us feel good, rather than vice versa, we're determined that nothing should remain to make His house more intimidating than lotto or less comfortable than a night by the telly. If beauty must go, in the interests of comfort, well, so be it. (*continues*)

And yet I believe if humanity, from its current predicament, were to invent a new religion, it would devise a morality that “incentivized” survival. It would deify Mother Earth, make heavenly disciples of sun and rain, worshipful shrines of fertility and compost, and sacred objects of wind turbines and worm farms. The rules of eco-living would become scripture, with spring and harvest the holiest days in the calendar. The highest sacrament would be a ritual receiving of the rains, while the various

categories of hubris and solipsism – waste and pollution, greed and gluttony, avarice, envy, and sloth – would be the new deadly sins.

Domination over nature would be reviled; the “feminine” virtues of giving and receiving, empathy and service, recast as the highest goods. From these, it would be seen, spring the other, secondary values – courage, imagination, beauty, and truth – by which to escape the prison of ego and to engage in nature’s great tapestry. To give, we would finally understand, is to receive.

The new churches would be nonformulaic. Built of tree trunks or concrete, carved from clay or solid rock, they would allow light from on high, centering on neither vestal flame nor man-god, but on pure, flowing, life-giving water. Designed to reveal to us our dependence on nature, they would balance light against darkness, the material against the ethereal, giving form rather than denial to our deep, mortal immersion in eternity.

Elizabeth Farrelly



A More Human(e) Approach to Design

From my practice of religious architecture, which is admittedly limited to synagogues, the main request I have been getting from clients is in the seating configurations. Whether it takes the form of a horseshoe, a semicircle, or a mixed assortment of arcs and angled rows, inclusive seating has replaced the auditorium-style seating where pews are placed neatly in rows one behind another.

While easy for clients to express, the change in seating is really part of bigger a revolution. The demand is for a more intimate style and scale.

The new architecture brings the congregation closer to the service and reflects a changing liturgy in which greater emphasis is placed on congregational participation and on a more egalitarian attitude towards clergy and congregant. In broader terms, the chapel has replaced the sanctuary, just as awe-inspiring spaces have given way to spaces that celebrate community and tranquility. In a similar way the cathedral's stained glass that keeps this world at bay has given way to the clear glass that revels in the nature of this world and brings its sunshine in.

While hardly new, the trend toward the more human(e) approach to synagogue architecture seems to be increasingly strong. The newcomer to the scene, gaining in strength at breakneck speed, is the demand for "green."

As to the future? If we are to assume that the changes in congregational life are to reflect what has happened to the workplace, we can expect congregations to be "tele-praying" with one another over their iPhones...but perish the thought.

Henry Stolzman, AIA

We Are Now the Ceremony

In the last 40 years, as we have tried to answer the question of religious architectural design in the modern age, our most important discovery is that the modern movement has not resolved the spiritual questions about architecture and it certainly has not resolved the design quality issues. It would be hard to argue that the average modern church is a better example of design than traditional churches, and it would be even harder to argue that the modern church provides a more spiritual environment for worship. As we have abandoned the metaphors of traditional design, we have yet to explore the value of those metaphors or to develop a new set for the modern era.

We used to walk into a church and hear the reverberation, smell the stone, feel the daylight penetrating the stained glass, and we often felt the mystery and transcendence of the space. As we listened to the music and the silence, we moved through the contrasts of an intentional gathering and the energy of the silence.

We now walk through the space, and the mystery is gone, the echo is gone, the daylight is intense, the room is often "in the round," and our orientation is to an empty social space, or to a service configuration that has redirected us to be observers of each other. We are now the ceremony.

As we move into the next 40 years, we must begin to understand that religious architecture and art must become far more intense in their spiritual value, the space must again be a significant contrast to our lives, and the gatherings must move us away from distractions toward the oneness that used to be the core of the experience. In all of the main religious traditions, the intent in worship is, in many ways, similar, as are the attendant philosophies of most faith traditions. We now have the tools to measure the value of religious spaces, we certainly have wonderful spaces to measure, and we need to apply the wisdom of the past and the science and research of the present if we are to move toward a future that allows our children to feel that religious environments and gatherings fulfill a need in their lives.

Steven J. Orfield



Mont-St-Michel Abbey Island, Normandy, France.

Photo: Cindy A. Paulinae, www.sacred-land-photography.com

The Language of Creation

Viewed from the perspective of eternity (as, probably, every work of sacred art and architecture should be), no current work seems more significant than the recent and growing interest in building “green” worship space. I incline to this view partly because of the energy statistics – in this country, building construction, maintenance, and operation consume about 40 percent of our energy and raw materials – but even more because of the Bible. Worship space is the only material artifact that the biblical writers ever describe in detail, and tellingly, their descriptions draw heavily on creation language and natural imagery. The construction of the wilderness tabernacle (Exodus 25–40) includes multiple echoes of the early chapters of Genesis; Solomon’s temple in “downtown Jerusalem” is a stylized garden, or perhaps a forest, redolent with the aroma of cedar (1 Kings, 6–7). The point of both lengthy descriptions is to demonstrate that the constructed sanctuary is a microcosm, an image of the world that God made; therefore it can articulate and shape our relationship to the work of God’s own hands.

Through the centuries, cultures rich in traditional knowledge devoted a significant portion of their creative and material resources to structures such as Chartres cathedral, in France, Borobudur temple on Java, Süleymaniye mosque or Hagia Sophia, both in Istanbul, places where the serious pilgrim, even the lingering visitor, might know what it is to stand at the center of the universe and glimpse the glistening web of life that binds us to every living creature and to the earth and the sky. Countless other more humble structures, many of them built by peasant farmers, have given worshippers that same experience. They remain powerful for us still, not because they are old, but because they speak so clearly the language of creation.

Yet probably most of us worship in buildings that are in that sense mute. Is it then any wonder that faith communities have generally lagged behind secular groups in hearing the “groaning” of creation (Romans 8:22) in our own time, in seeing the ecological crisis for what it is: the most urgent crisis in our life with God? Surely our worship spaces are places where our deafness and blindness might begin to be healed.

Ellen F. Davis

Evolutionary Paradigms in Mosque Architecture

While it is difficult to identify one important development in religious art and architecture, one tends to see major evolutionary paradigms. Taking mosque architecture as an example in Muslim settings – beyond the historical rhetoric – such paradigms varied dramatically over the past four decades. Strikingly, they have evolved underlying two opposing client attitudes. The first is exemplified by the unquestioning acceptance by the clergy of modern planning and design requirements, which led to the isolation

of the mosque from its community and made it a detached monument. The second is conceived in terms of the resistance of the clergy to all design innovation, which made most architects adopt a conventional approach that utilizes familiar imagery as a safe approach to client satisfaction.

However, one can identify four paradigms: the Vernacular, in which buildings are defined by a local language; the Revivalist, which refers to styles of specific historical eras as analogi-



cal sources for inspiration; the Eclectic, which makes reference to historical styles that are regarded as canons and classics by religious practices; and the Modern, in which tackling contemporary art and architectural issues remains a priority in an attempt to portray the contemporary Muslim.

In non-Muslim settings similar evolutionary paradigms have evolved and can be categorized under Cloning or Transplanting, where elements are copied from their original contexts and are pasted into the new one, as in the case of the Islamic Cultural Center in Washington

by Rossi and Al Hariri and that of Abiquiu, New Mexico, by Hassan Fathi; Adaptation and Re-Interpretation, where elements are abstracted and reinterpreted in a new form, as in the case of Islamic Cultural Center in New York by SOM and the Islamic Center of Rome by Paolo Porteghesi and Sami Mousawi; and Innovation, a new approach that is environmental, morphological, and semiotic, as in the case of the Islamic Cultural Center of North America in Evansville, Indiana, by Gulzar Haidar.

While mosque architecture embodies a language that invokes in Muslims a sense of

belonging to their present and a hope in their future, the most important development in the next few decades will be more expressive and understandable by all; it will place less emphasis on the “otherness” which led to a “rejectionist,” narrow, and constrictive approach that does not do justice to other cultures and to the richness and variety that Muslim culture has achieved in the past. It will take the form of more clearly identifiable buildings that are inviting and open to all, or at least not secretive, closed, or forbidding.

Ashraf Salama

Connected to God through Landscape

We must design sacred space that connects us with the sacredness of the landscape around us. To worship God, in any faith tradition, means experiencing the mystery and power of the creator in all creation. It also means learning to care for that creation as God does. Our architecture should help us know we stand on holy ground, not only when we gather in the sanctuary for worship, but also when we walk and live on the earth outside.

The connection to creation is particularly important for those of us who live and worship in the desert Southwest. For many Protestant Christians, especially those moving from greener climes, the desert is seen as a place of trial and testing, a wilderness to be conquered or at least saved from. That belief is reflected in Southwest church architecture that seems to strive more to shield the congregation from creation than to connect to it. Fear and misunderstanding of the desert is also reflected in the rapacious overdevelopment of urban areas like Phoenix or Las Vegas.

To advocate that our architecture should connect us to the desert as a sacred place may seem odd in this era of global warming. Yet now more than ever, we need the desert's lessons of interdependency and how to live within its arid limits. The desert Southwest is the fastest growing region of the country. We need a sacred architecture that will help our congregations experience God's presence in this life-giving landscape.

Rev. Talitha Arnold



Blue Mosque domes in Istanbul, Turkey.

Photo: Cindy A. Paulinae, www.sacred-land-photography.com

Keeping Balance in Times of Transition

Since the first issue of *Faith & Form* was published in 1967 major religions in the U.S. have experienced unexpected challenges from within their own memberships. One is the expectation that moral and doctrinal teachings will maintain some sense of relevancy in a time when life has become more demanding. Further, when a religion is no longer germane members will look elsewhere. This is why new Christian churches are attracting seekers who have become restless with older mainstream religions.

The renewal of worship practices marks another test for some faiths. The Roman Catholic Vatican II Council generated enthusiasm for liturgical reforms not only in its own ranks but also in many other Christian denominations. Similarly, institutes like Synagogue 3000 have fostered changes in worship practices among different branches of Judaism.

These emerging trends will affect the state of religious art and architecture. More contemporary forms are replacing traditional building styles. The time-honored incorporation of steeples, stained glass, and symbols is being replaced by more functional designs featuring amenities like barrier-free lobbies, child-care rooms, and dining areas. And, “green building”

principles are being employed with a new concern for the environment.

Worship spaces themselves are more inclusive and hospitable. In some places the focus remains on a center stage with audience-style seating. In other religions the congregation is arranged around focal points to invite more participation in ritual events. Lively musicians, singers, and multimedia productions now accompany the preacher who was once perched alone in a towering pulpit.

Today people seem to crave a sense of tradition in their lives at the same time they raise questions about it. Divisive words such as left or right, liberal or conservative are not helpful in searching for common ground. Religious art and architecture can serve the mediation process by balancing traditions with vision. Hanging on to the past while trying to move forward is never easy. Albert Einstein once wrote, “Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving.” There will always be a place for traditions in religion as long as people contribute to them with their own stories, in their own time. Art and architecture for worship can be reflections of these ever-changing narratives.

Richard S. Vosko

Restored interior of architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe's Baltimore Cathedral.



South Toward Home

When I left New Haven, Connecticut, in 1973, heading back home to North Carolina for my first appointment as a United Methodist minister, I reentered a liturgical life and architectural spaces not much changed in many years. In my first parish the celebrant still faced the altar with his or her back to the congregation. A nondescript and not prominent baptistery was at the side. Many of the sanctuary buildings were pulpit-centered auditoriums. The “Revival Style” liturgy prevailed. Post Vatican II developments in the contemporary ecumenical church soon changed all that. By the early 1970s the United Methodist Church was calling for a United Methodist Ritual that reflected historical and theological traditions while also embracing a commitment to communal involvement in the liturgy. By 1972 an alternate text for the Lord’s Supper had been produced. In 1989 a new *United Methodist Hymnal*, and in 1993 *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, were published. Both books were the culmination of a renewed appreciation of the relationship of Word and Table, a desire for a more frequent Holy Eucharist, the centrality of baptism as initiation into the Church, and the need to see the Church as the People of God in community. In the mid-1970s congregations redesigned worship spaces to meet these new liturgical realities, creating a table-centered

chancel, a clearly noted baptistery, a space for the Word to be read and proclaimed, and the congregation placed so that it is truly part of all liturgical activities. By 2000 most United Methodist seminary graduates knew and embraced the new liturgies, and many moved to facilities refurbished and designed to better house them. Thanks to the hard work of many, the denomination had liturgical resources and spaces that strengthened the community’s worship and empowered it for its mission in the world.


Were I to leave New Haven in 2007 to return to North Carolina I would find a rich and diverse liturgical life among United Methodists. I would find the liturgies of the 1980s present and helping shape the life of many congregants. I would also discover a new reality: a desire for churches to be more contemporary, more inviting to non-Christians, and the need for music, liturgy, and worship space that reflect a less formal and more robust participation of congregants in the worship service. The period roughly from 1970 through the 1990s produced a denomination-wide attention (not always embraced) to liturgical renewal and the concomitant need for architectural designs reflecting these changes. But the changes were rooted in liturgical life that was really part of United Methodist historic tradition. By the 1990s megachurches, seeker churches, and something called “contemporary services” challenged much of the liturgical thought of the previous years, and raised real questions about where United Methodists are headed in their worship life and in the buildings designed to house and enhance that liturgy. How are churches to build? Many congregations want worship centers that are multi-use spaces; the need for space to house Word and Table liturgies are not always paramount. The future for how clergy are trained, what liturgies will survive and shape the life of congregants, and what forms our buildings will take are all in a state of flux. Worship that is faithful to the God who calls us to worship and an environment equally true and apt will be challenges for the next several years.

W. Joseph Mann



Photo: Jeffrey Totaro/Esto Photographics

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Synagogues with Greater Communal Space

While it might appear to be an obvious and integral concept to religious architecture, I believe the expression of community has become a much more valued and vital component of sacred architecture in the recent generation. In both Christian and Jewish worship, a recall to original and historic organization has created the opportunity for these faiths to be expressed in developing, if not, different form.

Vatican II, in which the liturgy of the Mass was revised, also had an impact on spatial configuration. Before, a linear organization was derived from the basilica, and supported the processional. Now the congregation could be organized in a manner that was more communal, using the modified thrust concept of theater and wrapping the seating around to bring the congregation closer to the altar. This spatial arrangement is found in other Christian denominations and the result has been a variety of new forms expressing this renewed focus of community.

The synagogue experienced a similar evolution. Urban synagogues were constructed from 1900-1950 that echoed the spatial organization of the church and were essentially proscenium type spaces: the congregation facing forward towards a stage from which the service and sermon were presented and preached. The evolution of the Jewish community in the suburbs eventually required a different solution. Multiculturalism, not only in Judaic background, but in many aspects of life suggested that people wanted their spaces to reflect a more participatory, more inclusive, more communal attitude.

Worship began to return to its original form—that of the Greek council chamber, where the speaker was in front and/or center and the audience wrapped around on three sides. While this form of spatial organization remains prevalent in Orthodox synagogues, this was not so in most Conservative or Reform congregations. In many examples now built, congregants have sought either the “modified thrust” or “theater in the round” concepts to reflect this greater emphasis on intimacy and community. These shifts in attitude have also had an impact on how this faith has been expressed in form.

Looking ahead, one looks back. At the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, there is among the exhibits a powerful, simple one called “The Peopling of America.” It demonstrates the various waves of immigration from earliest to projected times, that we are a nation with an ever-changing “face.” As immigration patterns evolve and as globalization expands new opportunities will be created for additional faith groups to establish themselves and eventually to build their places of worship. We see this already in the many mosques being built. Pacific rim nations have other faiths, and their temples and shrines will also emerge. How these faiths are expressed in form will be, I believe, one of the exciting chapters in religious art and architecture in the next generation.

Maurice N. Finegold, FAIA



Basilique Ste-Madeleine, Vézelay, Burgundy, France.



Photo: Cindy A. Paulina, www.sacred-land-photography.com

Mega and Beyond

Out of our preoccupation with psychological insight and entertainment's significance, we, the faithful of the Christian tradition, have led architects to create what is now called the megachurch. Since the success of Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral of circa 1980 in California, and its many offshoots, a megachurch mentality has enjoyed nearly 30 years of influence. Fortunately that influence is fading.

Megachurch architecture will continue to be built because of its popularity. However, it will fade more quickly than most fads. It is most interesting that "megachurchism" has not produced a new, consistent form of church architecture. It is bogged down in an array of cultural forms that first served the secular public as commercial and entertainment centers such as shopping malls, auditoria, and arenas.

One aspect of the megachurch is worth pursuing. Communities have fostered some helpful new forms of ministry, namely ministry to children, teens, singles, families, and older adults. It is the proliferation of meaningless architectural forms that is the problem, and what those forms have fostered as public worship. Instead of worship as it should be, the megachurch has encouraged post-Freudian psychological clichés and has produced large entertainment centers. In those contexts one's feelings are given the highest blessings and when "good" entertainment is delivered, we call the result, "being the Church." Fortunately that phase, while it is still popular, is fading fast.

Two positive tendencies are emerging out of the ashes of megachurchism. Two church buildings designed and built at the beginning of the 21st century illustrate these tendencies. One is the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles, California., designed by the Spanish architect Jose Raphael Moneo. The other is the neighborhood parish church, the "Jubilee Church," in Rome, Italy, designed by Richard Meier.

The Cathedral of Our Lady is a design in dialogue with the city of Los Angeles that honors the diversity of its people; its congregation includes Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Mexicans, Armenians, African Americans, Filipinos, Poles, and others. The design considers its relation to the Hollywood Freeway as to a "river of transportation." And its location between the Civic Center and the Cultural Center of the city is central to its mission. The building includes the best that a sophisticated use of the

most modern technology can offer. Its architectural concrete is a color reminiscent of the sun-baked adobe walls of California mission buildings of old. In avoiding the rigid use of right angles in the design of the structure, the architect has respected the need for both mystery and majesty.

In sharp contrast, but equal in the integrity of its design, is the Jubilee Church in Rome. Known by the Italians as Dio Padre Misericordioso, the building was part of a highly competitive search by the Roman Catholic Church. The result is Richard Meier's winning building. In comparison with the Moneo building in Los Angeles, the Jubilee Church sits on a triangular site in the middle of an Italian neighborhood community on the outskirts of Rome. Also, it contrasts sharply with the impression that many Meier buildings make, namely that his monumental structures have landed dramatically on their sites. Consider, for instance, his buildings at New Harmony, Indiana; Hartford, Connecticut; Columbus, Indiana; and Atlanta, Georgia. Meier's design for the Jubilee Church appears to emerge from the ground, as though rising from the earth to be a new model for the message of the Church over and against the secularism of the world. Its asymmetry and open forms create a space flooded with light while embracing every season and every climate of that place. The building is in every way different from every other building in its setting, yet it has become very popular with the citizens of Rome. A parish church, it has become a famous and favorite marriage chapel. While it is a different and unique church building, it has been accepted by the public as a serious church presence.

As one faces the building, it appears to unfold, with three large sail or petal elements on the left side. On the right is a large element housing the office and the school. It is both transparent and solid. Its white exterior and glass interior give the structure the dramatic difference of a sacred presence for a secular world.

With these two examples of positive tendencies in church design, the next 40 years seem to be on the brink of producing unique forms that will serve the Christian tradition. The past 40 years seem now to allow, as we have seen, for there to be progress and integrity of design that will serve both ministry and worship.

John Wesley Cook



Ricardo Legoretta's Managua Cathedral.
Photo: Peter Aaron/Esto Photographics



Window Into Paradise

At least from the viewpoint of Catholic Christian traditions, I would say that we are in a time of great excitement and hope in terms of the future of sacred art. For the past 40 years, or approximately since the ending of the Second Vatican Council, there has been a great deal of both *aggiornamento* (updating) and *resourcement* (returning to the sources) both of which sought to cleanse sacred space of intrusive and superfluous Victorian and Gothic accretions and to bring the community to an understanding of liturgical language and

a celebration of materials, light, space, and the community itself.

While there was excessive, some would argue Carthaginian, zeal, the movement basically was healthy and badly needed. Today we are happily in the midst of a renewed understanding of the Image as a reflection of the “Invisible God,” and to that end not only Catholics but Christians of all denominations are once again entering into artistic relationship with the Image based on a keener theological grasp of its ability to act as a vehicle of prayer and

a “Window Into Paradise.” Simply look at the growth of Western interest in icons and the mystical language of Byzantine art.

It is said that it would take 40 years after a Council for the upheaval to die down and for the pendulum to return to a place of balance in the middle. After treading diverging and aesthetically antithetical paths for so long, the people of God are converging at the point of liturgical awareness, speaking a recovered language both sacred and beautiful.

Joseph Malham



A Glass Act

Architecture: Shaping space using objects in light to create practical and emotive places.

For me, architecture is fundamentally a spiritual enterprise.

The aesthetic and the spiritual are one.

Between shaping space, making place, and periodic prayer, I spend most of my time in the realm of the spirit.

Space is the glue that binds us all, light is its medium, present on the objects that shape space. Concrete and abstract, it is omnipresent, all defining, ephemeral and elusive.

For me, light and spirit are synonymous.

The evolution of glass is the defining development in the creation of sacred art and architecture, and, more important, in the sanctification of the spiritual in everyday life.

Over the past 40 years, we have gone from wanton abandon in our use of glass, without regard to the environmental cost and waste, to energy-efficient, dark and brooding, or reflective glass, virtually destroying the lucid, crystalline transparency that is its architectural essence, to a present where technology is returning glass to its essential promise as a primary medium of light and space.

Today it is possible to shelter sustainably, and to connect, intimately, to the elements – the sky, the landscape, the city – and to be bathed in light.

This ability is radically transforming architecture, restoring light to its essential role in defining architecture, and increasingly placing architecture at the center of cultural discourse.

I believe the essential spirituality of architecture, as defined above, “space shaped by objects in light,” is fundamental to architecture’s current ascent.

Michael B. Lehrer, FAIA

ESSAYS CONTINUE ON PAGE 27

New York Presbyterian Church, designed by Doug Garafolo and Greg Lynn.

Photo: David Sundberg/Esto Photographics





Rocky Hill Meetinghouse in Amesbury, Massachusetts.
Photo: Steve Rosenthal

Toward Spiritual Connections

I have created numerous religious facilities, primarily synagogues. Focusing on small congregations (fewer than 1,000 members), I have seen in the last 40 years encouragement in the use of natural light, warm materials, and intimate, interactive sanctuary configurations. Creating buildings for worship that are more welcoming and less austere, we have seen the contemporary reinterpretation of traditional sacred space ideas and the utilization of an open and contextual design approach. With increasing pressure to provide for diverse new programs, coupled with secular concerns, community needs, and the incorporation of new technology, we will experience requirements that have a direct impact on design solutions. Another major issue is to create inspirational space that is appropriate for the entire congregation's needs on major holidays, yet is intimate and comfortable for weekly services.

Future churches, synagogues, and temples will have a "green" and sustainable base. Security, social consciousness, and technology will add to this foundation. Traditional worship, educational and social activity facilities will also include friendly, informal, and inviting spaces for socializing, "kibitzing," and as a local resource for nonreligious programs. Under-utilized religious facilities will become available for subsidized social initiatives, programs that will blur the line between church and state.

Ever-present functional and economic forces will always be the starting point. Talented designers will interpret these 21st-century pragmatic essentials, future religious edifices will create spiritual places, no longer monumental, ornate, or traditional, but unique in their context, evoking personal and congregational spiritual connections. Individuals want to feel the presence of the sacred.

Michael Landau, FAIA

Renewed Appreciation for Beauty and Symbolism

The Catholic Church of the past 40 years has dressed herself with the sartorial savvy of a gawky teenager, going through an awkward stage while struggling with growing freedoms and responsibilities and trying to express herself. Architectural and artistic statements were made with great enthusiasm and little experience, as developments in the sacred and

secular worlds broke down old authoritarian models and opened up both worship and stewardship to new levels of participation.

After the decline of the Latin Mass came the rise of mass communication, bringing the faithful face to face in the worship space and into faceless contact in cyberspace. Liturgical changes coming out of the Second Vatican Council not only dictated new forms and locations for furnishings; they also encouraged the formation of committees that dictated the style and budget of the building and its interior. Twenty-five years later, technological advances provided these newly empowered committees with direct access to a plethora of self-taught artists and discount suppliers, but with no reliable quality control. Sadly, the cumulative effect of all these shifts in power and priorities created a paradigm shift in the marketplace for Catholic art and architecture that too often results in blandly cost-conscious buildings, sparsely decorated with mismatched furnishings and appointments of varying quality and durability.

The good news for the future is that the generations raised in these churches now long for inspiring buildings and imagery. At the same time, the shortage of priests requires fewer, larger churches to serve a greater number of parishioners whose larger budgets can support detailed architecture, worthy materials, and custom appointments. In order to create a stylistic vision and ensure compatibility of all elements of the building and the interior, these overworked pastors and their overwhelmed committees are increasingly turning to professional designers and consultants to coordinate the projects and bring in qualified craftsmen and reputable suppliers. Thus, the modern Catholic Church now has the opportunity and the ability to uphold standards of nobility in materials and aesthetics. This does not necessarily signal a return to traditional forms but certainly a renewed appreciation for the Church's rich heritage of beauty and symbolism, which can be carried into worship spaces of any style, promising a more informed, elegant, and mature wardrobe for her buildings in the future.

Annie Dixon

Sacramentality Versus Sentimentality

That which the Minimalist art movement of the 1960s and 1970s demonstrated was recently and dramatically illumined in an exhibit titled, "Sublime Convergence, Gothic to the Abstract" at the Richard L. Feigen & Co. gal-

lery in New York this spring. By juxtaposing 14th-century Italian paintings of saints with abstract works from the mid-20th century to the present, the exhibit showed the inherent spirituality of abstract art. It also showed the striking originality of late Gothic paintings that, having moved beyond the constrictions of Byzantine canonicity, achieved a distinctly modern flavor.

I have always felt that certain abstract works evoke a spiritual presence verging on religious experience. Mark Rothko's fields of color create for me waves of emotional excitation no less than the aura of sacred presence I feel when entering the abbeys of Thoronet and Senanques in France. In these 12th-century Cistercian spaces a sacred geometry delineates architectural volumes and establishes a sacramentality of presence. From the materiality of stone we sense eternal significance in their anthropological impermanence. Louise Nevelson achieved nothing less in her Chapel of the Good Shepherd in St. Peter Lutheran Church at Citycorp in New York. We enter a chapel where floor, wall, and furniture, all, are white. Nevelson's abstract constructions endow the walls with a totemic mythical sensibility. Her nonrepresentational configurations, while no less anthropomorphic than are pictorializations, attain the distancing factor that contributes to the aura of transcendence and mystical presence. The significance of this sculptural work remains instructional, as does the purity of Cistercian non-decorative architecture, for the cleansing of rampant theological defamation in the name of religious art.

Ultimately the issue remains one of sacramentality versus sentimentality. Both are grounded in the sensuous. While sacramentality rests in symbolic representations of religious notions, sentimentality is rooted in an overly emotional identity with subjective familiarity, allowing for little if any distance. Distance is an intellectual component of aesthetic experience that enables the object to breathe in time and into space, ever new for the beholder.

The contribution of abstract works by artists such as Ad Reinhardt, Barnett Newman, Kenneth Nolan, and Richard Serra, along with Louise Nevelson and, of course, Mark Rothko, is immensely important for the purification of artistic pictorialization of the sacred.

Although an incarnate theology calls for the "enfleshing" of the Word, greater attention to the spirituality inherent in abstract art may over the next several decades influence the liberation of religious art from its easy fall into nontranscendent literal theatricality.

John Giuliani

Spaces for Liturgical Hospitality

The reemergence of the holy class of the laity has caused a sea change in thinking about liturgical design over the past 40 years. Acknowledging the vital role played by lay participants in the celebration of the Mass and in ministering to each other has had a visible impact on recent church design. It has led, most evidently, to the resurrection of the centric plan of the early Church, which visually and conceptually brings the relationship of the clergy and laity into greater harmony and equality. At the same time, some of the traditional furnishings and venerative art associated with pre-Vatican II houses of worship are being brought back in recognition of visual art's mediating power to draw worshippers into a deeper state of prayer. Greater efforts are being made to identify gifted fine artists, whether believers or not, who are receptive to the divine and whose talents are sorely needed by the Church. Communal areas that have been either diminished or relegated to adjunct status over the years – baptisteries, narthexes, fellowship and educational rooms – are being renewed as significant loci that uphold the central liturgy and occupy an enduring place in the personal and collective memories of the congregation.

In the next 40 years, an expanded appreciation of the importance of these communal areas to the creation of a fully inclusive body of Christ will lead to the development of spaces that are more closely integrated into the Monday through Saturday lives of worshipers. Mainline churches will look to the liturgical hospitality practiced by Evangelical communities for ways to do this. Sacristies will be reconfigured to accommodate Roman Catholic women who have been ordained. There will be increased emphasis on liminality, whether within constructed spaces or the spaces between built components, that will be reflected in the use of metaphorically expressive materials, such as light and glass, which suggest spiritual possibility and transcendence.

Judith Dupré

Instauratio

Not unlike the halcyon days of the 1960s, the upcoming decades will see the revival of modernism as the style of choice for most Protestant, Jewish, and European Catholic communities. This will of course be in contradistinction to the houses that the members of congregations choose to live in, which will continue to have a traditional, if banal character. Some major megachurches will try to

invest in culture by hiring a “starchitect” like Frank Gehry, but probably not Zaha Hadid. However, if Steven Holl's St. Ignatius Chapel in Seattle, Washington, or Richard Meier's Jubilee Church in Rome are any indication, most famous architects will do one church and get it out of their systems.

Over the next 25 years, a few small but traditional Protestant congregations along with the Catholic Church will reconnect with their historic patrimony, seeking to build churches that symbolize the “House of God.” These “retro” churches, built in a great variety of rather expensive styles, will still pale in cost compared to the public funding of sports arenas, hospitals, and federal buildings. An institute for sacred art will be founded at a major, probably Catholic, university to train young, talented artists to bring about a serious renewal of iconography, in classical painting and sculpture, mosaics, stained glass, vestments, furnishings, and church decoration. At the same time, some of the wealthy but dying religious communities will invest in a rococo modernism while immigrant parishes in the major cities will construct dynamic baroque and elegant Gothic cathedrals out of stone.

Duncan Stroik

Conserving Energy and Modernism

During the past 40 years, the influence of the Second Vatican Council, more than any other factor, along with the ecumenical and interfaith movements that it spawned, redirected the design of ecclesiastical architecture. Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish leaders put away the crutches of historical architectural styles to a large extent in favor of expressing today's religious needs in today's architecture. Unfortunately, in the past decade some leaders, uncomfortable with the present era, have again fled to the past, perhaps in search of a more comfortable time when religious leaders faced less scrutiny and pressure from their flocks. I hope this movement will be short lived so that honest, contemporary expression will again prevail.

Other significant factors, such as the energy crisis and global warming, have led to the need for sustainability. The “green” movement was born in the 1970s with our nation's first major energy crisis, and brought about numerous attempts to solve energy problems creatively through passive and active solar systems, earth sheltering, daylighting, natural ventilation, heat transfer, and other techniques. During the 1990s these techniques were nearly abandoned in favor of historic copy styles. In the past few years “green architecture” has reappeared to

solve global warming mainly by reducing fossil fuel emissions. The need to sustain our world will influence architectural design for many years to come.

During the next 40 years, religious architecture in the U.S. will shift from expressing predominantly Christian beliefs to including a wider variety of other faiths. Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and others will most likely express their faith through their imported, traditional architecture. Their next generation hopefully will adopt the contemporary architecture of the U.S. Immigrants from Central and South America are expected to remain mostly Roman Catholic, although some have already joined a variety of other Christian denominations. Within the Catholic Church, they have already made significant changes in music and liturgy to express their Latino origins.

Lawrence Cook, FAIA

Thoughts Within Time

Within the evolutionary context of time, our structures are born: materiality rising from the generative forces of the unfolding world and from our consciousness within it.

Forty years ago we stood in the midst of the 1960s, the catalytic time that knew the impact of Vatican II, an explosion of cultural change, a rise of human hope that sought to reveal in form and circumstance the wholeness of the sacred, the immanence of the holy, the fulfillment of worship in frontiers of social justice. From our vantage point in 2007, this beginning time was the most important moment. In it occurred a redefinition of the worship community: now a pilgrim people who gather in worship, go forth to be justice.

Counter forces rose quickly against this vibrant vision, this exultant moment. Fundamentalism, individualism, deception, exploitation, magnification of inequities, war... global in scale, radical in import. We emerge graver, less naïve, in a new landscape. Micro/macro technology, complexities of diversity and history, national and corporate forces organizing for gain leave us hungering for clarity, truth... places in which faith is at home in this turning world.

We are not in a trivial time. We who answer with vision and design have the ability to be a deep source of grace...to meet this frontier of the future by bringing into being places of power, of stunning rightness, devoid of trivialization/ego/misaligned priorities. Architecture of greatness, not self-oriented but transparent, space in which redemption is experienced, hope enlivened, persons know return. Space congruent with global realities, discernment

of stern truths... startlingly simple space, experiential grace, capable of being loved by variant communities, able to know integrity in the face of knowledge yet unknown... space whose beauty endures.

Barbara Chenicek, OP

Meditation Centers and Megachurches

Forty years ago, America lost its soul. We became a superpower without purpose, dominating the world economically with our brands and yet losing militarily – and morally – to the weakest opponents, first in the jungles of Vietnam and now in the deserts of Iraq. The spiritual emptiness of our empire propelled many people in two opposite but related directions under the 1960s banner of “the personal is political.”

On one hand, there appeared New Age spirituality, in which politics became personal as Aquarians began to explore inner kingdoms of consciousness and to seek self-improvement and psychic purity in reaction to a hedonistic, selfish, and corrupt corporately run country. The meditation center best symbolizes that self-reflective movement. On the other hand, there arose old-time revivalist religion, in which the personal became political as Evangelicals began to inject religion into government and to impose their beliefs on a diverse population in what they, too, saw as a hedonistic, selfish, and corrupt Hollywood-run country. The megachurch best represents that highly assertive group.

While I personally much prefer spiritual flower-power to evangelical fascism, we may find, 40 years hence, that neither can adequately address the challenges we will face amidst unpredictable pandemics and unbelievable poverty, global climate change, and growing terrorism. The legacies of the 1960s may be both too much about saving the self and not enough about serving the millions of people who will need our shelter, solace, and support. As the monastic system emerged from the ruins of the Roman Empire, so too may we find a modern-day version of that system coming out of the ruins of our own empire.

We already see this happening among the mainline religions, which, like the political moderates, have suffered by being in the middle in an era of extremism. The most important changes to churches and temples may be less architectural than functional, as they double as food shelves and homeless shelters, run-away refuges, and crisis centers. The medieval monasteries served such diverse roles, and we may find our mainline religions doing much more of this as our spiritually empty empire continues to crumble.

Thomas Fisher

Remember the Basics

Exciting things are happening in worship spaces of all sizes and denominations. It seems to me that congregations are striving to do buildings that celebrate the unique character of their denomination, order of worship, and congregation. There is also a growing sophistication in how the messages of faith and service are delivered to the congregation and the larger community.

Much attention is given to the growth of megachurches with sanctuaries that hold thousands of people for one service. Worship takes place in auditorium-like spaces that support an emphasis on preaching, performance, and the music ministry. Worship services use video projection, theatrical lighting, and high-quality sound systems to enhance the message. Services are recorded and distributed in real-time on CDs, DVDs, and streamed on the Internet.

The majority of worship spaces, while smaller in scale, have ministries just as wide reaching. Some congregations are developing their facilities as a focal point for their entire community. Churches are including edu-



Photo: Steve Rosenthal

Congregational Church, Oxford, Maine.

cation wings or buildings that become a campus for life-long learning as well as for religious education. Other congregations support the delivery of social services to the most needy in their communities by providing counseling spaces, meeting rooms, clinics, shelters, and food pantries.

“Green” architecture is also becoming more prevalent in church design. Sustainable design practices allow a congregation to be good stewards of the Earth by minimizing the impact a new building has on the environment. Sustainable design also allows church leaders to be good stewards of the congregation by using church resources efficiently.

Regardless of the size or type of congregation, the basic principles of excellent sightlines, comfortable seating, good acoustics, and fellowship spaces are all needed to support a positive worship experience.



High altar, Abbaye de Fontevraud, Loire Valley, France.

Architecture can enhance the worship experience by providing functional, spatially rich, and uplifting spaces that engage the senses and the spirit. With all the new trends in worship facility design, it is still important to remember the basics.

Paul A. Harding, FAIA

A Breakthrough in Sacred Art

The post-World War II religious architectural building boom created, possibly, the greatest era for ecclesiastical art and architecture since the Renaissance of the 15th and 16th centuries. The evolution of the modern churches had its seeds planted with Auguste Perret's 1921 concrete church in LeRaincy, but clearly burst forth with Le Corbusier's revolutionary Ronchamp pilgrimage chapel in 1953. The modern movement in the U.S. was invigorated by architectural luminaries Frank Lloyd Wright, Eero Saarinen, Wallace Harrison and Max Abramovitz, Pietro Belluschi, Louis Kahn, and Marcel Breuer, and by nationally practicing stalwarts such as Maginnis and Walsh (Roman

Catholic); Edward Sövik, Charles Stade, and Norman Mansell (Lutherans); Harold Wagoner, William Cooley, Hensel Fink, and Robert Durham (Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians); and a host of regional practitioners who served the Baptists, Disciples of Christ, and the other denominations.

These thousands of new buildings called for a breakthrough in sacred art that can be traced to the small nondescript Dominican Chapel at Assy in the French Alps. The French priest, Father Couturier, stranded in the U.S. during World War II, was able to chart a new course in religious art by dialog with world famous non-Christian artists including Fernand Léger and Marc Chagall. When the church was completed in 1947 it featured a giant tapestry by Jean Lurçat, a façade mosaic by Léger. Tabernacle sculpture by Georges Braque, a baptismal font by Jacques Lipchitz, and a ceramic mural by Chagall. The stained glass was designed by Jean Bazaine, and George Rouault (one of a handful of practicing Christian artists), and the crucifix by Germaine Richier. The sheer magnitude of this collaboration, eclipsed the art seen in many galleries throughout Europe. The controversy

the art created echoed all the way to the Vatican, but was staunchly defended by such notables as Maurice Lavanoux, editor of *Liturgical Arts* magazine; the use of modern art was then forever firmly planted in the Church.

When *Faith & Form* evolved in 1967, the brainchild of Washington, D.C., architect Benjamin Elliott, aided and abetted by liturgical guru Robert Rambusch and innovative architect Edward Sövik, it could easily have become a mundane house organ for the AIA. But its subsequent editors put the magazine on the cutting edge: for more than 20 years Betty Meyer, whose strong background in the arts as former director of the New York-based Society of Arts, Religion, and Contemporary Culture, made sure it exemplified the best work in modern art and architecture gleaned from the biannual architecture and arts competition that the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art, and Architecture promoted beginning in the 1970s. The magazine's quality has been further enhanced under the direction of its current editor, architect Michael J. Crosbie.

What will the future bring? The 2007 AIA Conference was intensely "green," and this

important trend will have an effect on sacred art. I hope it will not deteriorate into wind-generating steeples with cross-shaped propellers or photovoltaic stained glass windows. In my field of architectural glass, the advances in laminations will enable an artist to create layers of free-form color and decorations in large areas with no structural interruptions. Such advances will offer tremendous opportunities that have been used mostly in commercial buildings so far. While traditional religious work will continue for a number of decades, the ever-expanding number of technologically astute artisans in future generations will use video and other projection mediums to create constantly changing art forms that will evolve in ways not yet dreamed of to engage the worshipper.

E. Crosby Willet

The Evolution of Muslim Space

Contemplating significant impacts on sacred spaces in the past four decades, without the benefit of formal study in the subject area, is a journey of reflection through my own architectural practice. I draw on my insights and experiences as the architect of several mosques in British Columbia. Places of worship for Muslims in Canada have undergone transformations similar to the development of religious spaces of other minority immigrants that arrived earlier in the 20th century, such as Ukrainian and Jewish communities. The trajectory generally follows their socio-political progress within the larger Canadian context: from working-class immigrants preoccupied with economic survival, to a Canadian second generation and newer professional immigrants with a greater voice in public discourse.

Muslims started praying collectively in basements. As their numbers grew they moved to rented commercial space and then into converted churches, closed due to declining attendance. Today, all large Canadian cities have several large purpose-built mosques within the metropolitan area. These have evolved beyond strictly places of worship; they are centers of community, educational, and networking activity.

Muslim communities are demographically diverse in Canada. They are comprised of various ethnicities from around the world with subtle but marked differences in their practices and their "imagined mosque," but all are eager to assert a collective Muslim identity through their emerging institutions in their new home. Unfortunately, the architectural result has been mixed. Without design leadership that resists ad

hoc nostalgic replicas of "Islamic" motifs, many mosques have been created as curious collages of arches and domes of uncertain origin.

When architects have had the will and felt the responsibility of challenging misunderstandings of what is Islamic, the result has been a search for a new mosque typology that is distinctly Canadian: striving for an Islamic architecture that responds to the northern climate, regional building types and a social pluralism, unique to Muslims in the West.

Fluid socio-political pressures on Muslims, both internal and external, make it difficult to predict the impact on their collective space in the next decades. Will the community temper its distinctness? Will attendance dwindle with increasing secularisation and the perceived safety of assimilation. Many believe that, with their freedom of thought and action, a renewal of Islam will occur within the Muslim communities in the West, and with it a powerful evolution of mosque form and function.

Sharif Senbel

Form Reflecting the Dynamic Divine

For the past 40 years the human imagination has continued to give form to faith, whether by recalling what went before, or by forming something new. The new in the unfolding imagination has been evidenced in two ways. First, what could before be imagined only abstractly, can now, with advanced technology, be physically formed. Second, we have begun to recognize that our technological advancements must be imagined, formed, and employed in ways that respect and do not damage the physical world.

"Enduring" works such as the Romanesque, the Gothic, and the baroque, were, at their imagining and execution, new. In these past four decades we have created new and enduring forms of faith, exemplified in the architectural forms of, among others, Frank Gehry and Santiago Calatrava. In these same years, we have recognized that human "creativity," exemplified by the inefficient use of energy and the use of nonrecyclable materials, has the power to affect adversely the very form of natural creation. This important recognition has prompted the process of responsible progress, as in the development of "sustainable" architecture and the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design).

These two recent advancements portend what I believe will be the significant directions of the next 40 years. First, if form is to reflect the dynamic divine that faith seeks, we must

encourage and support the imagining and the creation of ever newer iconography and architectural forms. Second, we must commit the human imagination to reflect the divine imagination by respecting, and in some instances, healing the planet and the environment with which we share life.

Rod Teissere Stephens, IHM

A Pendulum Swing Toward Tradition

Churches throughout past centuries have included overt expressions of key elements of the faith: a stained glass window picturing the disciples, perhaps, or an ornately gilded cross. In the past 40 years, however, we have seen a move toward a more abstract expression of historic sacred iconography, in both art and architecture. An emphasis on the primary architectonic building blocks – space, form, materiality, light, movement, and sound – has led to a reductive synthesis of art and architecture in the design of churches. The result has been an attempt to integrate artistic expression that is symbolic of the faith into the very essence of the architecture, or at least into a seamless supplement to the architectural design. For example, a cross may be expressed as an integral part of the architectural form itself, not merely as an added decorative element. When achieved with strong understatement, this approach can become an appropriate metaphor for the integration of our faith into the wholeness of our lives.

The move toward abstraction has served the Church well in reaching out to those who were disillusioned with the traditional Church, along with its historic symbols and rituals. However, it appears that we are beginning to see a pendulum swing back toward a renewed appreciation of those traditions, with a younger generation that seeks the spiritual richness and reverence found in this heritage. Over the next 40 years, this sense of direction may lead us to new church designs that recognize not only the refined strength of abstract architectonic form, but also the broad diversity of our artistic heritage. Our vision will be to achieve a deeper, more expressive integration between art and architecture. The ultimate goal will be a redemptive character that reaches out to a world that hopes to experience what the psalmist knew intimately, when he called on us to "worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness."

Charles J. Hultstrand, AIA

Rebirth From Ruin

In the U.S. and throughout the world, cultural heritage is often defined by religion and char-



Judson Church Renovation, New York, New York.
Photo: David Sundberg / Esto Photographics

acterized by sacred art and architecture. When cultures clash, iconic representations of our faith often become targets for destruction, and their obliteration a perceived symbol of dominance. I believe the most important development in the past 40 years has unfortunately been one of ruin, while the next 40 years will determine our place in history as we cope with issues of rebuilding where sacred art and architecture have been threatened or demolished.

The campaign to destroy Buddhist temples and monumental statues in Afghanistan during the last decade resulted in the unspeakable loss of artistic and cultural sites of Buddhism that withstood more than a thousand years of Islamic control prior to the Taliban regime. The Taliban's extremist opposition to the representation of godly forms in art or architecture brought an international outcry, but ultimately resulted in a tragedy of epic proportions to the world of sacred art and architecture.

My home state of Louisiana witnessed a similar threat to a unique culture, this one caused by natural causes, hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Throughout South Louisiana, churches that served as the cultural foundation of communities were destroyed, and with them the congregations bound together by their church were scattered in a diaspora that covers 43 states. Never before in America has a unique culture been so threatened by such abrupt devastation. As Louisiana recovers, the manner in which we rebuild our communities, our churches, and our lives will be observed by the world. The value we place on these symbols of our faith will be determined by their place, design, and construction. This will be our legacy for generations to come.

From a global perspective of sacred architecture, the completion of Gaudi's Sagrada Familia in Barcelona will eclipse all other architectural developments in the next 40 years. Never again will the world of sacred architecture observe such passionate commitment to a project or faithfulness to a design. Surely Gaudi's intention that it be the last great sanctuary of Christendom will stand for some time unchallenged.

Victor F. "Trey" Trahan, III, FAIA

The Poetry of Existence

Faith exists in the balance between the spiritual and the intellectual, the metaphysical, and the physical – making sense of the unknown or even the unknowable. It is a search for validation of the self, a search for a place and a purpose, a search for acceptance of what cannot be controlled and, ultimately, the inevitable. While understanding and reason play an important role, faith lies, first and foremost, in the fulfillment of a universal human need for spirituality, for a sense of inner peace. Faith is in the mystery of the numinous; it is the poetry of existence.

Against this awesome nature of faith, what role do architecture and art play? Could it be as enhancer or facilitator? Religion clearly recognizes the value of art and architecture when, in the Old Testament, Bezalel is asked to gather the finest materials and create a holy place. "Build Me a sanctuary so that I may dwell among you" may not be an approved AIA contract document, but it is a clear directive and an implied recognition of the need, if not the value of sacred design and architecture.

Which client does architecture really serve? Is it faith, with the emphasis on the spirit, or the institution of religion, with admittedly overlapping but different needs? There has been a visible shift towards addressing the business of religion – creating community centers with flexible multipurpose spaces, utilizing the latest technologies – all in order to attract greater memberships with new expectations. Is cost-effective more important than sustainable, respectful of nature and resources? Is the message in the multimedia projections? If we continue in this direction, as we seem to be doing, will there be much soul left to be nourished?

Sacred art and architecture have an increasingly greater responsibility to balance the needs of the spirit with those of the body. This challenge may not be new but the stakes appear to be getting higher.

Michael Berkowicz

Function as Determinant of Form

We marvel at medieval church construction. The Romanesque and Gothic churches of Europe are awe inspiring. Their beauty as art and architecture is the very definition of sacred for most.

We realize that they cannot be duplicated, we cannot achieve their glory, and we cannot accomplish their spatial volume, their proportion, or their art. We do not have the money, we do not have the time, we do not have the resources, and we do not have the same connection to church that caused these sacred places to be built. Yet centuries later this idealistic sense of sacred remains in our mind. The nature of our worship and the real functional limitations of these spaces are seldom challenged. Vatican II did challenge. There have been other challenges, but few if any have inspired or encouraged in the same manner. So we have developed religious art and architecture that explore the functional act of worship as the determinant of sacred form.

Architects, artists, and liturgical consultants have explored structures that look beyond the rules of memory and Gothic tradition to organize spaces that emphasize assembly, community, and gathering. "Form from function" rather than "function from form" it would be argued. Such architectural and artistic freedom has been received with enthusiasm and criticism. Change, as always, is welcome to some and a curse to others.

Now we see advances in technology and communication beyond any prediction. We have a generation for whom the computer is a basic essential. We have iPods and iPhones and our lives can fit on a memory stick. We have new tools that allow art and architecture to combine with computer technology to produce form and work that once was impossible but now is possible. We also have a clearer, almost Franciscan, understanding of our interdependence with each other and with planet Earth.

The exploration, change, and debate over sacred art and architecture will continue. The artistic and architectural sacred experience of the past 40 years is merely a glimpse into what lies ahead. We must factor into the equation technology capable of translating form in response to environment as well as to tradition and function. We must recognize that the next 40 years will take us to completely new levels of the sacred in art and architecture.

Craig Rafferty, FAIA

The Wake of Multicultural Congregations

Within the Roman Catholic community, it was the multifaceted impact of the implementation of the ritual reforms inaugurated by the Second Vatican Council that caused the greatest development in art and architecture for worship in the past 40 years. In sheer magnitude alone, the work undertaken by Catholic parishes and schools during that time to accommodate the new liturgical rites was unprecedented. Catholics continued to build new churches during these years to respond to both the overall growth of the Catholic population and to the shifting of populations. But, in addition, every existing Catholic church has had to undergo at least some interior and often some exterior physical restructuring so that the people might celebrate the new liturgy properly.

The following elements were the most important in dictating a new space for Catholic worship: the role of the assembly shifted from



Cloistered porch, Notre-Dame Church, St-Père, Burgundy, France.

being “attendees” to being the active agents of the worship events – demanding a sense of a gathered community around altar and ambo (lectern); the diminishment of the role of the tabernacle in the main worship space, and the creation of chapels of reservation; the introduction of gathering spaces in addition to the main worship space to promote relationships among members of the assembly; a renewed emphasis on the importance of the baptismal font affecting its shape, size, and position in the building; the enhanced role of the minis-

try of music and the embrace of a variety of musical instruments; and, finally, a different kind of space required for the sacrament of reconciliation.

The most important development in the next 40 years will be connected to the vastly increased number of Catholic parishes that will have truly multicultural congregations. Many parishes will have an Anglo-Latino mix, but many will have three, four, or five significant ethnic groups in the congregation. This will demand cultural accommodation that will not

fundamentally change the key Church rituals, but will, in some cases, augment them significantly with popular devotional practices. This multicultural phenomenon will have a strong influence on the art in churches, both in the worship area and in devotional areas.

I also believe that all Catholic parishes will become more sensitive to the need for good art in the worship space that will support a deeper involvement in the liturgy. In the last 40 years, good art, which should be in the budget for new church building and significant renovations, was frequently the first victim of budget cuts. I look for that situation to improve.

Lawrence J. Madden, SJ

Urban Churches Bound for Destruction

Architectural history will most probably record as the most significant religious action of these last 40 years, not an architectural creation at all, but an architectural destruction – the felling on 9/11 of those dualistic towers. It was their Arabesque design and their mosque-like placement on the plaza that marked them for destruction by their religiously motivated, but architecturally trained pilot destroyers. They read those towers in their mind’s eye as gigantic insults to the Arab world – as exclamation marks built with stolen Arab religious forms used by the West to celebrate its utterly secular business values. The West, with its pale religions, of course, could not even begin to comprehend such religious architectural fervor.

But this was only an incident in the history of the West’s lost ability to appreciate the power and significance of architectural form. Modernism, last century’s attempt to recover a sense of the meaning and power of pure form, capitulated first to nostalgia and now to a kind of personalism – to the idea that the sacredness of a building comes from the worship of its designer and not from the building itself.

We build our cities and their component buildings to follow developer programs, believing completely in the “necessity” of those sacred “balanced” budgets that for as long as they last, will umbilically keep our buildings alive while we hope that somehow our magic architects’ wands will cast their spell over the works so that, although each building has its predetermined life term, each will somehow also convey eternal religious values.

But the architectural truth will “out” eventually, and the arid commercialism of our times will be easily read in the clustered towers that now mark the heart of every upcoming American city. Our urban churches

Photo: Cindy A. Pauline, www.sacred-land-photography.com

will optimistically be read as imported flowers occasionally left for a brief moment in the sun before their mortgage-timed destruction.

William J. Conklin, FAIA

Art is a Story-Teller

Forty years ago I was just out of school, trying to get someone interested in my work. Abstract art was all the rage. I didn't study art (that's a long story), but in my naïve, unstudied way I wanted to convince the art world (at least my local Dallas gallery) that objective art still had a future. I wanted to draw and paint real things. After awhile I gave up and became as abstract as I could. I obtained some good museum showings, as it turned out, but I got very bored with the art I was creating. And 40 years ago religious art, too, was in an abstract frenzy. Architects and parish committees thought that architecture alone could carry the emotional and instructive weight without the use of narrative art. You still see the warmed-over versions of this approach today – it costs less after all. Perhaps I am being too harsh. It isn't nonobjective abstraction in a church that irritates me. Rather, it is the belief that emotion alone is sufficient. After all, that's what nonobjective art communicates, the designed-to-offend-no-one visual muzak you see in secular and sacred spaces alike that evolved after the 1970s. Such art, like much of contemporary art, is about feelings alone. Art has been greatly reduced by this.

But slowly, objective art is making a comeback. In the last 40 years the gallery/museum world has started exhibiting such artists as Lucian Freud, Odd Nerdrum, Andrew Wyeth, and other representational artists. I am happy to say my own representational work is acceptable in the sacred art world. Moreover, the two worlds of sacred art and secular art are, and have always been, inseparable. This comeback of narrative, representational, illustrative art is essential for the gospel to be communicated in a parish setting. The gospel is, after all, a series of stories. Stories need to be illustrated. Those who want to reduce the gospel to universal emotions destroy it. The universal is always found through the specific. Jesus is our teacher on this. You may want to speak about kindness in terms of feelings alone, but the feeling will soon fade. On the other hand the story of the Good Samaritan will be remembered forever.

This is true of art as well. Certainly abstract color, form, and line can communicate emotionally, but objective art, using the same tools, can move us emotionally and instruct us at the same time. All the blue and green splashes of color I've seen in an attempt to make Stations

of the Cross cannot communicate in the way even a small well-crafted narrative group of art works can. Paint me stories about God and I will remember them.

John Collier

Providing a Sense of Community

The most important development in sacred architecture in the last 40 years has been the effort to create buildings that provide a sense of community for a diverse group of people. I have learned from my clients that in our increasingly diverse society a place that provides a sense of belonging is important. There are many examples of beautifully planned religious buildings (almost campuses or miniature towns in spirit, if not in scale) that provide people with a social and spiritual center for their lives.

I think we have not been as successful at creating imagery (the shape and texture of buildings) that resonates with such a diverse group of people. I think even in communities as diverse as those in the U.S., a sense of memory in our architecture is essential to feeling rooted. Building shapes, materials, and details all tell a story of who we are. Abstract shapes have been the solution to date; the best are beautiful and can awe us, but intentionally convey abstruse meaning to most people. As my uncle says, "I don't get it." For the next 40 years the biggest and most wonderful challenge for architects will be to create religious architecture that a diverse group of people can feel rooted in.

James C. Childress, FAIA

Church Building: Building Church

Forty years ago my current pastor was a young assistant pastor and a part of the process of renovating the first church to which he was assigned. The renovation was announced to the congregation. The church doors were closed for a certain period of time and then reopened when the renovation was completed. The pastor and the architect made all the decisions. There was no involvement of the congregation members except through their pocketbooks. Half the parishioners left when the doors reopened.

Building a place of worship today – at least in the liturgical Christian traditions with which I work – would not take place without at least some congregational involvement. Listening sessions for the community are part and parcel of church building. Education about changes

in liturgical practices, their effect on worship space, and opportunities for input on design decisions run throughout a building process.

In Christian liturgical traditions changes in worship practices have energized both the design and the faith communities. Designers focus on altars separated from the wall, on immersion fonts, and on floor plan arrangements that embody the reforms articulated by the Second Vatican Council. The plans in turn realize a shift from basilica-shaped buildings to more centralized forms. Ritual space is embraced by the congregation as sanctuaries are thrust into and surrounded by worshipers.

Religious – spiritual and liturgical – art within the last 40 years has moved through an iconoclastic period favoring abstraction to one favoring the reintroduction of imagery. While traditional imagery is currently espoused, most of it is strongly filtered through an idiosyncratic personal spirituality. It is this emphasis on the individual that I see as the biggest change in both religious art and architecture.

In the next 40 years, I expect several trends. One is a visual "hardening" involving religious doctrinal entrenchment layered on structures and art works. Another is an ever more personalized spirituality elbowing its way through. These two paths I see reflected in both artistic and architectural styles whether retro or contemporary. Green architecture supported by eco-spirituality will be the commonality of this next wave.

Carol Frenning

Back to Nature, Back to Nurture

A new flexibility between the container and the contained, and a renewed relationship to the natural world characterize many religious groups today, and these values are reflected in our architecture.

We could not have imagined in 1967 that our mountain landscapes would be sites for new sacred buildings, illuminated by bright skies, powered by wind and sun, and cooled by ground water. We could not have imagined that urban visitors would seek these places as sites to renew their faith and reconnect with nature. And we could not have imagined that these rural retreat centers and their urban counterparts, in many religious traditions, would draw on the common themes perhaps first articulated in Vatican II: a return to vernacular, a new freedom in shaping worship space, the end of pews, and the advent of chairs. We could not have guessed then that we would, today, create a plan for a Jewish retreat community based on sustainable prin-



Chapter hall, Abbaye de Fontenay, Burgundy, France.

ciples, or that we would design a hall of the arts for a Zen Buddhist Monastery, powered by wind and water, reaching for light and sun.

We have helped a resident group at a staid Protestant seminary take the first step of freeing their pews from the floor, putting them on wheels; and the second step, replacing the pews with chairs; and the third step, creating services conducted long-ways, short-ways, and side-ways, in the nave of their traditional worship space. We are now working with a rapidly growing Jewish congregation, helping them create a place to worship together, beyond pews and beyond chairs. Their requirement is a flat floor sanctuary, a common ground for a thousand congregants dancing and singing together, a community of movement and joy.

Can we imagine, 40 years from now, that religious architecture will be at the forefront of creativity, embodying the deepest principles of connection to land and sky, leading the way to sustainability, cherishing the Earth? Let us guess that it will be communal faith and meditation that will inspire the continuing search for physical forms that establish the sense of place, that reflect our need to feel at home inhabiting the world.

Frances Halsband, FAIA

40 Years of Creative Change

Over the past 40 years, the Second Vatican Council served as a catalyst for some of the most important developments in sacred art and architecture in the Catholic Church. Sacred art became more open to expressing a symbolic essence beyond likeness or image of a scripture passage, parable, or saint. Glass art and architecture harnessed light itself as a primal symbol to create an awareness of the movement of the sun, the change of the seasons, and the church's connection with nature.

The Church has continued to pay attention to its relationship to the

Earth, as seen in the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) 1991 document, "Renewing the Earth." Here, the bishops wrote, "At its core, the environmental crisis is a moral challenge. It calls us to examine how we use and share the goods of the Earth, what we pass on to future generations, and how we live in harmony with God's creation." These words have begun to shape reality with the Vatican's recent decision to "go green." The Church understands this as a justice issue and is becoming aware of the necessary moral imperative in our building practices and how we live.

The concerns surrounding justice and sustainable architecture are fraught with many other pastoral challenges affecting the Church, such as changes in understanding the implementation of Vatican II, a shortage of priests, and how all of this affects a congregation's experience of worship. Pastoral care, artistic, architectural, and lay leadership must be brought into the conversations surrounding these difficulties. Only then will we have the tremendous energy and creativity that is required to find new solutions to honor God's sacred creation and pass on a habitable environment to our children.

Elizabeth Devereaux

The Age of Aquarius

*This is the dawning of the age of Aquarius
The age of Aquarius
Aquarius! Aquarius!*

The Broadway show *Hair* opened in October 1967, about the same time *Faith & Form* premiered. *Hair*, shocking when it opened, managed to plumb the discontent of that era. Borne in frustration with the war in Indochina, *Hair* celebrated diversity, embraced the anti-establishment, and encouraged multi-culturalism. The creators of *Hair* were

inspired by the passions of anti-war protesters in American cities and identified strongly with the movements for liberation. They created the story, characters, scenes, dialogue, and lyrics for the show that seemed to portend a new era of optimism, diversity, and transformation.

This was a period of incredible change, not just in the theater, but throughout the world of arts, religion, and culture. Perhaps the single biggest reform movement in the Catholic Church since the Reformation, Vatican II was convened in October 1962 and concluded in December 1965. Though many take issue with the subsequent interpretations of Vatican II, clearly an ecumenical spirit of collaboration and diversity influenced the outcome. Catholics who previously only celebrated mass in Latin were suddenly hearing the words of the service in their native tongue, and were encouraged to be full and active participants in the celebration of Mass.

Artists were prominently addressed in Pope John XXIII's closing remarks to the Council, "We now address you, artists, who are taken up

with beauty and work for it: poets and literary men, painters, sculptors, architects, musicians, men devoted to the theater and the cinema. To all of you, the Church of the council declares to you through our voice: if you are friends of genuine art, you are our friends."

The 31st National Conference on Religious Architecture, held in April 1970 in Washington, D.C. called for an architecture of involvement: "It is hoped this year's Conference will have as an end product a clear vision of the integration of all of the forces now providing challenges to a better way of life. Hopefully, there will be revealed and recognized new approaches, and possible solutions; and these by individual localized adaptations may yield nationwide results not only to the architect and churchman, but to a more wholesome environment through reaffirmation of the love of God through our concern for and love of fellow man."

The last 40 years have seen true acts of ecumenism, such as the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, and the concordats effected between denomina-


tions to allow for shared leadership and texts. For the first time in centuries, churches are designed flexibly as meeting places for religious and secular events. There has been an incredible growth in "gathering spaces," rooms without any purpose other than to provide stand and talk space for congregants. There has been an explosion of parish hall additions and new church starts.

What has driven these changes? The same spirit that influenced the Second Vatican Council to significant change; that spurred religious artists and architects to form one voice through a new publication (*Faith & Form*) and merge into one professional organization (IFRAA); that inspired persons of faith to demand more meaningful dialogue in their worship spaces and outside of them; and to urge many to come together in ecumenical harmony and understanding: The need to express the ineffable, to celebrate diversity in our respective cultures, our faiths and our common humanity.

Douglas Hoffman, AIA

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Peter Aaron worked as a film cameraman before deciding to concentrate on architectural photography, which has been his specialty for over 25 years. **The Rev. Talitha Arnold** is Senior Minister of the United Church of Santa Fe, New Mexico, a United Church of Christ. She has led the church through three building expansions. **Michael Berkowicz** of Presentations Gallery, based in Mt. Vernon, New York, is vice president of the *Faith & Form* board of directors. **Barbara Chenicek, OP**, belongs to the Adrian Dominican Order and is a principal of INAI Studio in Adrian, Michigan, which has received several *Faith & Form*/IFRAA Religious Art & Architecture awards. **James C. Childress, FAIA**, is a principal of Centerbrook Architects & Planners in Centerbrook, Connecticut, and has designed a number of religious buildings. **John Collier** is an accomplished sculptor who has won numerous awards in the *Faith & Form*/IFRAA Religious Art & Architecture Awards program. **William J. Conklin, FAIA**, trained and currently practicing as an architect and urban planner, also writes about mythology and about ancient Andean art and archaeology. **John Wesley Cook**, a prolific writer and scholar of religious art and architecture, is professor emeritus of religion and the arts at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music. **Lawrence Cook, FAIA**, is the head of Lawrence Cook Architecture, which has specialized in Christian church design for three generations. The firm has offices in Falls Church, Virginia, and Venice, California. **Ellen F. Davis** is Professor of Bible and Practical Theology at the Duke Divinity School, Duke University. **Elizabeth Devereaux** is a stained-glass artist based in Chico, California, and the winner of numerous Faith & Form/IFRAA Religious Art and Architecture awards. **Annie Dixon** is project manager at Dixon Studio Ecclesiastical Interiors, webmaster at the Church Architecture Network, and serves on *Faith & Form*'s editorial advisory board. **Judith Dupré** writes about architecture and consults on the creation of visual arts programs for communities, civic institutions, and houses of worship. She also serves on the *Faith & Form* advisory board. **Dr. Elizabeth Farrelly** is a columnist for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and author of the forthcoming book, *Blubberland: The Dangers of Happiness*. **Maurice N. Finegold, FAIA**, is principal of Finegold Alexander + Associates in Boston and a recipient of IFRAA's Edward S. Frey Award. **Thomas Fisher** is Dean of the College of Design at the University of Minnesota and serves on the *Faith & Form* advisory board. **Carol Frenning** is a liturgical design consultant who works with congregations throughout the country as they build or renovate their worship spaces. She served as chair of the national advisory board for IFRAA in 2005. **John Giuliani** is a monk at the Benedictine Grange in Redding, Connecticut, and is an accomplished artist. **Frances Halsband, FAIA**, is a partner in R.M. Kliment & Frances Halsband Architects, New York. She served as the 2005 *Faith & Form*/IFRAA Religious Art & Architecture Awards jury chair. **Paul A. Harding, FAIA**, is principal of Harding Partners, Chicago, and a past Chair of IFRAA. An architect of religious buildings, **Douglas Hoffman, AIA**, is former Managing Editor of *Faith & Form* and a past IFRAA chair. **Charles J. Hultstrand, AIA**, is Director of Design for Neal Prince Architects of Greenville, South Carolina. He lectures on church planning, partners with the Cornerstone Knowledge Network, serves on the board of *Faith & Form*, and participates actively in his local church.

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Architect François de Menil's design for the Byzantine Fresco Chapel Museum in Houston, Texas.

Photo: Terri Meyer Boake, School of Architecture, Waterloo University



New Exploration in Sacred Building

BY JAMES THOMAS HADLEY

On the 20th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, in 1986, the late liturgical artist and consultant Frank Kacmarcik published an assessment of church architecture in which he described the intervening period as a “time of exploration.”¹ Today, more than 20 years later, this label still seems to be a precise description of the state of sacred architecture. The fertile reformation ground turned over by the Council has generated the end of a monolithic expression of sacred architecture and has replaced it with a “pluri-formity” of architectural possibility. The results of exploration, however, can easily be called uneven. In the same article, Kacmarcik contended that the time of exploration brought about by renewed liturgical scholarship and consciousness had not generated

the vigorous and profound sacred architecture one might have expected. Rather, he emphatically stated, “With few exceptions the church buildings constructed in the past 20 years in this country have been inferior to the average secular buildings erected since the Second Vatican Council. They may justly be described as mediocre, if not inferior. They are often examples of ‘architectural gymnastics.’ ... The simple fact is that our new church buildings are often among the uglier structures in our cities, suburbs and towns.” In light of his comments, we are left to ask what the solution is to these uneven results. How is the ecclesia to discover vigorous and profound contemporary sacred architecture?

The often-weak architectural results of the past 40 years have led some to suggest an end to exploration: retreat to past sacred forms,

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Photo: Terri Meyer Bouke, School of Architecture, Waterloo University

Detail of the Byzantine Fresco Chapel Museum.

those that once made up the monolithic voice of the sacral, is suggested. Hence, one sees today churches once re-ordered being re-ordered again. Some new construction evidences sporadically applied veneers of past styles.² Today, as the search for a new paradigm of sacred space continues, a simplistic appeal to supposedly sacred and profane labels, of which the above-mentioned trend is illustrative, is unproductive. While there is general consensus regarding the need to replace the admittedly banal strip-mall-like structures currently being built to serve the liturgy, what their replacement is to be remains in dispute. But it is clear that the emulation of past styles as ornamentation or emotive stimuli is naïve.³ I suggest that what is necessary to create spaces that are able to “bear the weight of mystery” is not disengagement from exploration but rather a more profound, reinvigorated time of exploration. A hallmark of this occasion will not be the mimicry of past architecture as style but the appropriation and application of its deep layers of logic to the built environment of today. I argue, therefore, that the Gothic medieval enterprise has surprising significance for church building today, providing thought-provoking material for exploration that can contribute to the development of vigorous and profound sacred spaces.

An initial layer of Gothic logic, attained through a more precise dialogue with the architecture made possible by the application of historical context, is hinted at in the name itself. Gothic architecture derives its name from the Goths, a barbarian tribe of late antiquity. While scholars disavow any actual connection of the style with the actual tribe, the name highlights the fact that the Gothic enterprise

has its roots in the social and cultural disarray of the 5th to the 11th centuries. What can surely be termed the pessimistic social origin of the Gothic style, born as it was from social, economic, and spiritual upheaval, is even more pronounced when the medieval theory of time is taken into account. In that society history was in decline by its very nature. The world’s finality was intensely believed to be not far off.⁴ The ecclesia’s response to this chaos and the fusion of the Roman and barbarian⁵ words it helped usher in was the Gothic enterprise itself. From this cultural paradigm Gothic structures began to rise as eschatological signs. The monumental western façade was a bulwark against the chaos and the evil that were believed to reside in the West. The church building denoted an apocalyptic hope in which society and the individual might find sure salvation.

This historical context announces the wisdom of Gothic architecture, demanding that ages of doubt and insecurity, however construed, require a pastoral response by the ecclesia in its architecture that is new, creative, and bold. Such an age is present today, according to the Council’s reading of the signs of the time.⁶ The medieval ecclesia developed a new architecture of its own making.⁷ It is the challenge to the ecclesia in this day to do the same. How is this to be accomplished? Marvin Trachtenberg believes that the hallmark of Gothic architecture was not the pointed arch but rather the broken arch – a deliberate subversion of previous Romanesque building practices.⁸

Contemporary ecclesiastical architecture might adopt this attitude by consciously engineering structures and organizing space differently from that which one encounters on a daily basis. This might be



Crossing under dome of the Byzantine Fresco Chapel Museum.

as simple as structuring the roof spans of a church building differently from those in the local shopping mall, or as complex as inventing new systems altogether. The work of François de Menil at the Byzantine Fresco Chapel Museum in Houston, Texas, gives some indication of the possibility. The exhibit creates a chapel by inserting original frescoes in a structure of nearly opaque glass and metal apertures against a black background.⁹ The planes of white glass and black shadow create a sacred space that is Byzantine but subversive of its original built form – a space that is at once both new and not new.

Like medieval Gothic structures, contemporary ecclesiastical architecture should manifest itself with the boldness of apocalyptic hope. The church building is a liminal event; that is to say, it is a place that anticipates the future apocalyptic moment in history when the cosmos will be recreated. In that moment a great inversion will take place. The meek will inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5), the mighty will be cast down from their thrones (Luke 1:52) and death will be no more (Revelations 21:4). Yet the liturgy celebrated within the church is that moment beginning already. The building is an eschatological envelope, therefore, where a future moment and a place merge, making a now, where the infinite enters the finite. This suggests first that the contemporary church building have a dramatic sense of “situatedness,” of belonging to the spirit of the place. This is effected by consideration of both building material and orientation. Materials of the locale should be utilized. In addition, deep orientations must be considered: the altar axis, centralized axis, east-west axis, city axis, and the natural environment. Second, the built environment must attain a sense of the apocalyptic moment.

Taking the materials of the natural environment and relating them one to another in an unexpected way, thus symbolizing the future reordering of the cosmos, might achieve this. Alternatively, the building might have a sense of incompleteness, suggesting it will be complete only when the reign of God appears in its fullness. The building might also dissolve away, that is, fade into future fullness. A current successful attempt of this latter motif can be seen in the new Cathedral of Christ the Light in Oakland, California, designed by SOM. The upper portion of the building structurally dissolves into a glass oculus that opens to the heavens above.

A second layer of logic found in Gothic architecture suggests that contemporary sacred space should embody the multiple disciplines of theological studies as they are discussed today. Medieval Gothic architecture was a physical expression of the dominant theological trends emerging in ecclesiastical schools. Two of the most prominent subjects explored were the relationship of light and the principle of order as they related to God. Light and order both became primary factors in shaping medieval sacred space.¹⁰ Gothic churches were edifices of applied theology. While liturgical communions have gained ground shaping their churches based on contemporary liturgical theology, the same cannot be said of the application of entire theologies called for by the wisdom of Gothic architecture. For the Roman Catholic Church an agenda of contemporary theology is most aptly summed up in the Conciliar and post-Conciliar documents of the Second Vatican Council. What might its application to the built environment both mean and look like?



Design for the Cathedral of Christ the Light, Oakland, California, by SOM. Photo: Gerald Ratto, courtesy of the architect

The *Decree on the Means of Social Communication* speaks of the ecclesia's need to engage and utilize modern means of communication to make Christian witness more accessible and effective. This directive highlights the public persona of the church building. It is not a silent presence in the public place but the announcer of a message. There is a need, therefore, for the architecture of a church to engage the public in effective dialogue. Traditionally this has been done through the campanile, the steeple, porches, plazas, and monumental sculpture. Renewed attention might be given to these methods as well as to experimentation with multimedia. Could the striking porch of Maurice Novarina's *Our Lady of All Grace* at Assy, France, be translated into fiber optics?

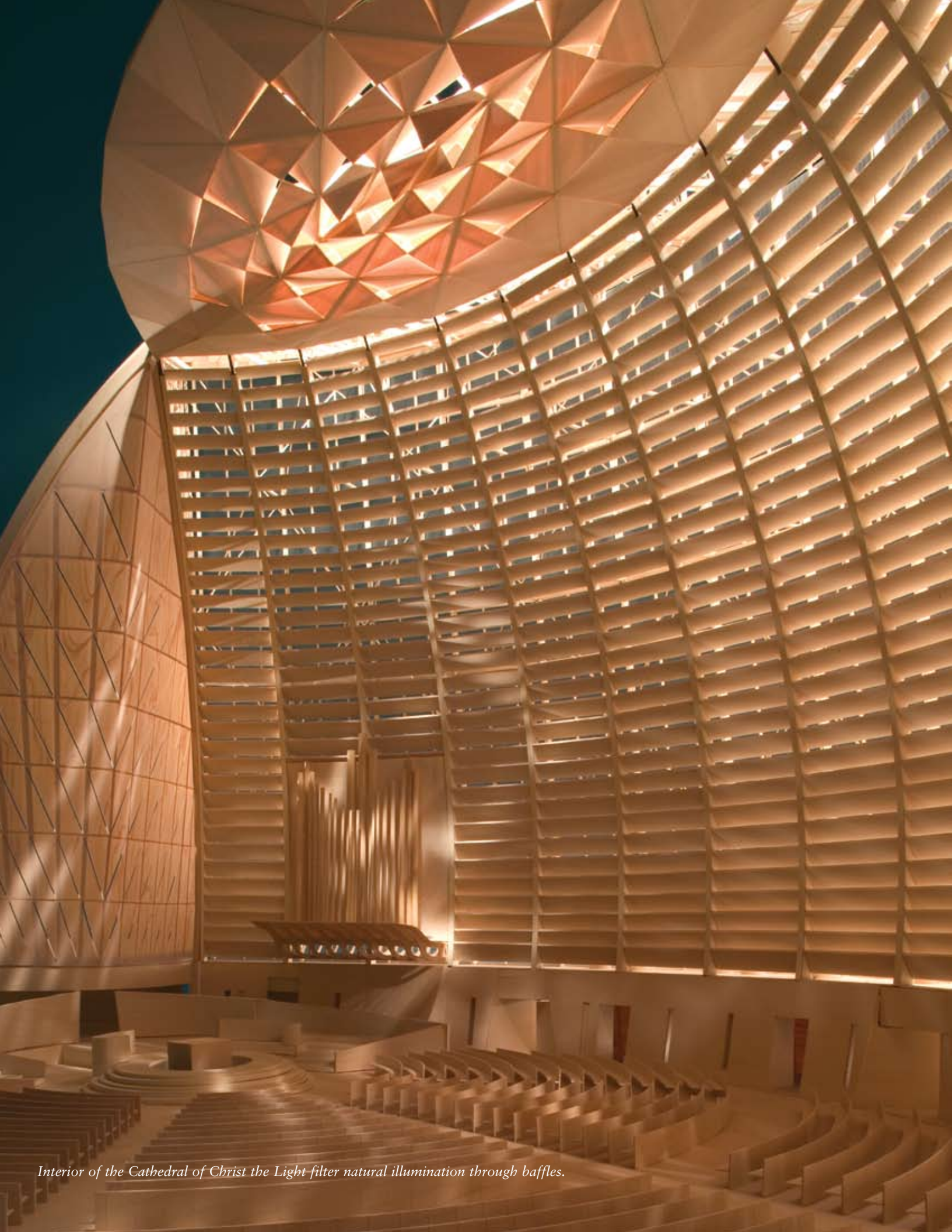
The built environment must embody the ecclesia's respect for labor and its preferential option for the poor, as spoken of in the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. In the first place this requires that the process of building or renovating utilize just labor practices. Second, construction techniques and materials might be considered that retain the imprint of human labor: chiseled stone, clay brick, troweled concrete, planed wood, and hand-blown glass. Sacred space must welcome the poor of the community and the immigrant. A decision should be made against structures that are architecturally standoffish, decidedly white-middle-class suburban. Careful judgment of aesthetic character must be made in this regard. This does not mean a type of contrite anti-colonialism that prohibits gilding and uses lower-quality materials in preference to their more expensive counterparts. It means, rather, an appropriation of the artistic and architectural heritage in which the immigrant is rooted.

Further applying the theological agenda of the Council means the building must be one that is pro-life across the spectrum, as spoken of in the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. The so-called "crying room" seems out of place in this regard: an official segregation of the mother and child from the worshiping community. The cry of the infant must be welcomed even with the issues of audibility and distraction it raises. Acoustical engineering should plan for this from the outset. In addition, the disabled and the elderly should not have to use a service entrance or sit in the rear of the church; they must have pride of place. Accessibility does not mean the elimination of monumentality, as is so often the case today when the church sits on the same plane as the asphalt parking lot. Staircases and ramps can be integrated. A pro-life space might also make bold use of the cruciform in an effort to reinvigorate the view of the cross as an instrument of execution, thereby highlighting the ecclesia's opposition to capital punishment.

The building must also encompass the ideals of ecumenism, as spoken of in the *Decree on the Catholic Eastern Churches*, *Decree on Ecumenism*, *Declaration on the Relations of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, and the *Declaration on Religious Liberty*: The sacred built environment must seek to foster relationships with other Christians and with other faiths, while avoiding syncretism. One possible way is through the appropriation of the architecture or spatial arrangements of another tradition's sacred space that are particularly suited to the ecclesia's worship. An obvious trend in this regard is the Roman Catholic Church's renewed attention to preaching and its impact on liturgical space, thanks to various churches of the Reformation tradi-



Detail of the Cathedral of Christ the Light suggests a bishop's miter.



Interior of the Cathedral of Christ the Light filter natural illumination through baffles.


tion. The rise of ritual studies offers possibilities that are more dynamic. Liturgists are now more profoundly aware of the dynamics of “enacting” the liturgy; that is to say, the mysteries are celebrated through gestures, objects, and words. In this light, the movement of Muslims at Mecca during the Hajj, spiraling to an epicenter, has much to say to Christian sacred space and movement around the epicenter of the altar. Some of this insight is captured in such places as Tadao Ando’s Church on the Water in Hokkaido, Japan. Its form reflects not only the passage of time but also the passage of the person whose journey through the built environment culminates at the altar.

The sacred assembly of today, as well as in the past, spoken of in the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, must be remembered by contemporary architecture. In a society where thought patterns are structured on 30-second sound bites, it is imperative that the built environment be not only a catalyst for the ecclesia’s memory but that in some respect it become the ecclesia’s memory. The building might evoke conceptual memory through the use of image, projecting in stained glass the assassination of Archbishop Romero in El Salvador in 1980, the underground ecclesia of China, or the silent assembly created by embryonic technologies. At the same time, the building can become memory itself by housing not only members of the ecclesia who are alive but also the dead awaiting resurrection; by returning to a custom of burying the dead within the floors and walls of the church, or in close proximity, a continuous trans-generational narrative may be concretized and perpetuated.

An issue with probably the highest degree of agreement between the ecclesia and the contemporary culture is the natural environment. Such shared conviction should lead the ecclesia to insist that its buildings be ecologically sound and sensitive so as to adhere to the principles of the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. Such events as the Italian Catholic Conference’s newly inaugurated annual “Day for the Protection of Creation” must be followed by concrete actions in the built environment. Churches should be engineered to offset carbon emissions by the efficient use of energy, thus reducing the building’s carbon footprint. Most of the building’s energy consumption should comprise green and renewable energy. While simple strategies can be employed, such as window placement, rain-water collection, masonry walls, and managed asphalt use for parking lots, certain communities are better positioned economically and morally than others to be more robust in their support and facilitation of green architecture. Not only should more advanced technologies be used, such as solar power, but a community might involve itself in a process of technology development. At the least, sacred space should not be an island in an asphalt sea.¹¹

Further application of the theological insights of the Council indicate that the building must repudiate extreme individualism and foster solidarity in the universal quest for holiness, i.e., must remind us that we are indeed responsible to and for one another as spoken of in the *Decree on the Means of Social Communication*, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church* and the *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People*. In addition, the church building must be one that rejects false ideologies of government and economy, and protests against war, as spoken of in the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. Finally, it must be a building that proclaims the Father, Son, and Spirit as the hope of humanity and its true teleos, or end, as spoken of in *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, the *Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity*, and the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*.

That the architectural embodiment of some of these theologies is clearer than others is not surprising. They are new grist for yet unturned mills. The initial contemporary possibilities laid bare by the character

of Gothic architecture, as I have articulated above, indicate the creative role of past architectural forms in shaping contemporary sacred space as well as the need for continued exploration. Historic architecture gives significant points of reference to consider when answering the questions of what worship spaces should look like today and what exactly they should do. What is called for 40 years after the Second Vatican Council requires the concerted new effort on the part of pastors, theologians, sacred assemblies, artisans, and architects to build the vigorous and profound spaces capable of bearing the weight of mystery. It will take no less a genius than a modern equivalent of Abbot Suger and a master mason to create the sacred spaces towards which the Gothic enterprise prods the contemporary ecclesia, but when that is accomplished, the gathered community will experience once more the awesome provocation of faith within a structure whose integrated nature unites worship, theology, and the world into one. 

FOOTNOTES

1. Frank Kacmarcik, “The State of the Art of Our Churches Today,” *Worship* 60, no. 5 (1986), pp. 455–459.
2. Such examples include Saint Jerome Church, Waco, Texas; the Oratory at Ave Maria University, Naples, Florida.
3. On the dynamics of this trend, see Richard S. Vosko, “A House for the Church: Structures for Public Worship in a New Millennium,” *Worship* 74, no. 3 (2000) pp. 194–212.
4. For a broad array of essays on the Medieval concept of time, see Gerhard Jaritz and Gerson Moreno-Riano, *Time and Eternity: The Medieval Discourse* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2003), especially “History and Everlastingness in Hugh of St. Victor’s Figures of Noah’s Ark,” and, “The Final Countdown: Apocalyptic Expectations in Anglo-Saxon Charters.”
5. Jacques Le Goff, *Medieval Civilization 400–1500* (New York: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988), p. 23.
6. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 58 (7 Dec. 1965): 1025–115.
7. Gothic architecture was the modern architecture of its day devoid of any historical precursor. This is not to deny the obvious architectural evolution in building *τεχνη*, reflected in form, but rather it is meant to highlight that the intention of those involved was to create something distinct from what proceeded.
8. Marvin Trachtenberg, “Suger’s Miracles, Branner’s Bourges: Reflections on ‘Gothic Architecture’ as Medieval Modernism,” *Gesta* 39, no. 2 (2000), p. 187.
9. James McCown, *Spaces: Architecture in Detail* (Gloucester, MA: Rockport Publishers, Inc.), p. 189.
10. See Robert A. Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003) pp. 103–20, and François Bucher, “Medieval Architectural Design Methods 800–1560,” *Gesta* 11/2 (1972), pp. 37–51.
11. The antithesis to this proposition is found in such structures as Blessed Sacrament Roman Catholic Church in East Hartford, CT. See Jeffery Howe, *Houses of Worship* (San Diego, CA: Thunder Bay Press, 2003), p. 324.

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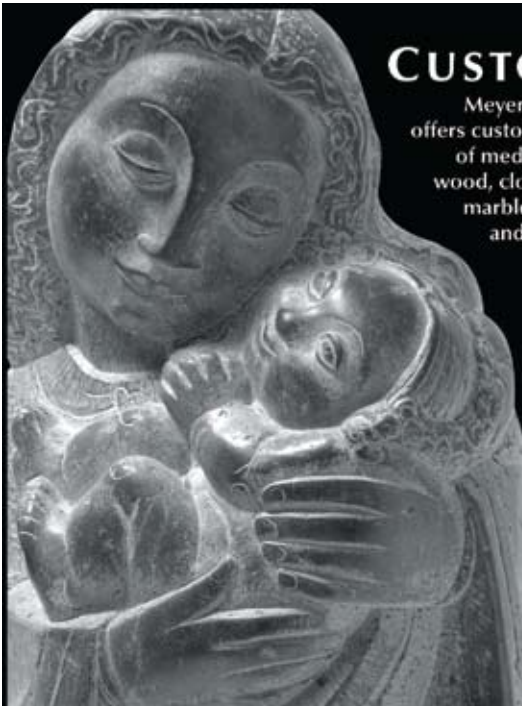


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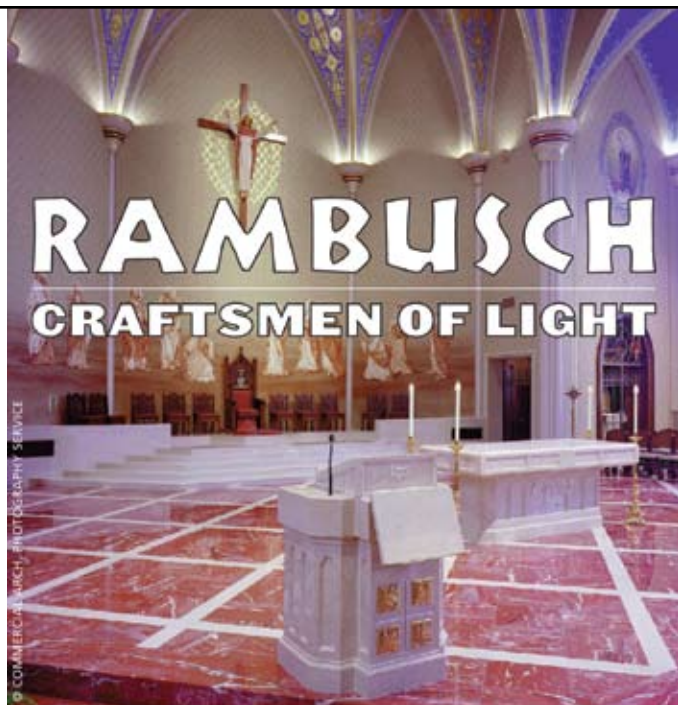
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THE CASE FOR YOUR IMAGINATION

JUST ONE MORE THING... ★ BETTY H. MEYER

When I retired as editor of this journal in 2000, I wrote an article on the beginning, past, and present of *Faith & Form*, and what I hoped for its future. I wrote that I hoped it would remain an independent, dynamic publication and that its dedicated staff would guide it successfully through its transitional periods. I think they have done this and I want to say congratulations!


But I also wrote that I wished more painters and sculptors, more musicians and congregants would write articles and share their perspectives and work with us. We need a wide range of sensibilities to publish a relevant magazine in today's world.

I confessed that I sometimes felt cynical and depressed about the future of religion but that often articles in *Faith & Form* gave me renewed hope. I quoted from a book by curator Bartlett Hayes, *Tradition Becomes Innovation*, in which he assured us that innovation has many creative possibilities. But now I'm feeling strongly that before innovation can be truly successful we have to understand the tradition from which it emerged. Tradition and innovation should be friends, not enemies.

Today, we see many young people (and some older ones too) withdrawing from traditional institutions and immersing themselves, as individuals, in contemporary culture. Consequently, religious institutions especially are suffering from a loss of membership, attendance, and shrinking budgets. I was distressed recently to learn of a committee in an old historical church that believes that changing the interior of the church will help with these problems. They want to purchase modern furniture and patterned carpeting, install different lighting, change the art on the walls, etc. They do not realize that they are not properly valuing the beauty of the traditional or that the admixture will be offensive to many of the congregants. On the other hand, they are frustrated that their convictions about the contemporary are not only desirable, but inevitable. They feel the traditional congregation is not taking their position seriously. Confusion abounds!

Solutions to this problem, and to many others, are necessary before our present can become our still hidden future. We are in fact experiencing the demise of a world picture and the breakup of the symbols within it. "A world ends," Archibald MacLeish wrote, "when images are still seen but no longer have meaning." I truly believe that we are in a crisis that is affecting all faiths. We yearn for cultural renewal and its accompanying power to promote hope for the future.

Answers will not be easy or come quickly, but our 40th year challenges us to ask what we as members of a faith can do. Several of you have told me that you already feel that you are in the presence of something waiting for expression but that you can't define it. We feel this in the forest of ourselves and are waiting for inspiration. This is encouraging, I think. Since its beginning *Faith & Form* has honored artistic imagination and its revelatory powers. We have believed that these powers give us images before thought and that imagination is as much a cosmic power as a psychological faculty.

What is the second word in our own name? Form. I dare to imagine that some of you will inaugurate an entirely new form of architecture to house our various faiths. We must promise ourselves that we will be receptive to images from the beginning, before they are sufficiently investigated and integrated into a body of ideas. Surely an archetype of a universal religious building is lying dormant in someone's imagination. We must have faith that the years ahead will give us this new form. 

BETTY H. MEYER IS EDITOR EMERITUS OF *FAITH & FORM* AND CAN BE REACHED BY EMAIL AT BMEYER@FAITHANDFORM.COM

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