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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Much of today’s culture has given up confidence in many of the long-standing principles that once stood behind the creation of art, architecture, and other products of culture. These principles include the ability to establish true precepts, the ability to judge goodness, and the ability to create objective beauty. All of these are now commonly undercut by doubt, uncertainty, or outright opposition, so that cultural products now posit questions rather than truth, convey doubt rather than goodness, and cater to a sense of pleasure rather than beauty. In opposition to this allegedly necessary quicksand is a purposeful movement of practitioners asserting the reality of solid ground. They argue that this solid ground is found in the wisest principles of the past, and that the best forward route in many disciplines is the embracing of this wisdom. The contest between these practitioners and those of the current mainstream is not stylistic, but presuppositional. What this thesis intends to examine is the role that the Christian Church, and more specifically the Protestant Church, plays in this contest.

Alasdair MacIntyre, in *After Virtue*, portrayed this contest, in the realm of moral philosophy, as a choice between Nietzsche and Aristotle. He shows that Nietzsche’s views were both the culmination and the necessary abandonment of the Enlightenment project of replacing tradition with self-grounding truth and meaning.
based solely on human reason. Nietzsche ripped the mask off of Enlightenment morality by revealing that all moral utterance based on nothing higher than human rationality is only the concealed utterance of individual will. The relativism in all realms, including the arts, which followed Nietzsche, has held sway over the last century, with disastrous results. MacIntyre argues that the only other possible choice is a return to a pre-Enlightenment intellectual tradition, originated by Aristotle, and developed by others, such as Thomas Aquinas.

The general cultural trend toward relativism and away from tradition has led to a loss of once-held values. Simultaneously, the Protestant Church, if not the whole Church Catholic, has become inattentive to many of its own inherited values. What makes this latter loss more troubling is that these values are not simply based on a tradition, but rather are part of a holistic understanding of the core of the Christian faith. Forced in the last century to seriously question its every bedrock precept, the Church has practiced the strategy of holding tight to its most central core beliefs, while allowing other important beliefs to be nearly lost or forgotten, or at least held so loosely that they are rarely seen by Christians as having immediate relevance in the actual activities of the Church.

One thing that is interesting to note is that the same beliefs (to be noted below) that the Church has nearly let slip away are coincident with those enumerated by MacIntyre and others as being central to a reconnection to lost traditions: Aquinas-Aristotelianism for MacIntyre, Classicism for a host of artists and architects, and traditional urbanism for New Urbanists. If the Church can reacquaint itself with its lost values, it can simultaneously restore both its own internal culture,
and aid in the restoration of art, architecture and other cultural activities inside and outside of the Church. This is important because the interests of the Church extend beyond the walls of the church building. The Church has a mandate to participate in the mending of culture, which will continue until the full arrival of the New City.

This thesis will address the loss within the Protestant Church of a deep understanding of the connection between beliefs and cultural products, and attempt to demonstrate how the reacquisition of this understanding can bring a restoration to both art and architecture in general and within the Church itself. It will begin by taking one of these beliefs, the importance and value assigned to community, and examining its relationship to urban design, in order to provide an example of the intimate link between a belief and created form. Following this will be a consideration of several other beliefs, the full recovery of which are imperative to the Church and which can become the basis for the Church’s participation in the development of art and architecture. The subjects of these beliefs are items highly valued by the Church, and may be termed as: mandates for cultural creation, authority, tradition, sign and symbol, the sacred, beauty, and narrative. After a reflection on these values, there will be a brief account of the traditions of Protestant church design, followed by a description of a new design adhering to the values which will be laid out.
I. Community and Urban Design

In the art of good building, which we call architecture, there are many categories which determine success in serving the purpose for which a building is designed. One of the most important of these exists just outside the walls of the building itself. That is to say, the building’s position within a larger scheme, and the way in which it is integrated to that scheme, has much to do with the success of its design. For most buildings, this larger context is the city, the physical place of a gathered community in which the good life is sought. The city, in this context, can be said to include any village, town or metropolis. Architecture and the design of its larger urban context together constitute Civic Art, which has as its goal the betterment of our civic realm. Its products are the buildings, monuments, urban and rural spaces whose designs have as their aim a civilized domain.

There is reason to believe that the dominant form of urban design over the last sixty years is problematic for both the architecture and the people inhabiting the urban realms it creates. The Church should be especially concerned with the current state of urban design, because the problems it generates effects the two groups of people for whom the Church is called to have genuine concern – those within and
those outside the Church. The Church has a mandate to be Christ’s continuing presence in the world. One aspect of this mandate is care for those within the Body, by way of living out a life of substantive community together. Another aspect is care and concern for those outside the Body, by way of the Church’s participation in the surrounding community. Both the dominant urban paradigm and the architectural paradigm with which new church buildings tend to comply are antithetical to the life of these two communities. The Church values community because it believes that humans are communal by nature, and that an isolated life is antithetical to a life of mutual benefit. This value is perhaps most clearly articulated for the Church in Scriptural passages concerning the community of the early Church,¹ and in the letters of Paul addressing the issue of the body of believers.²

A dominant urban growth pattern today is commonly referred to as ‘suburban sprawl,’ and is characterized by zoning regulations which divide civic functions into separate districts. This is a growth pattern which embodies a particularly modern characteristic of the individual as an autonomous, isolated consumer. It caters to this consumer’s desire for separation from perceived aspects of the civic community thought to be disagreeable by grouping like with like. Homes are grouped together according to their sale price. Commercial enterprises are grouped together, away from housing, with the large roads and parking lots needed to accommodate the automobiles necessitated by their distance. One immediate result of this growth pattern is the obstacle it presents to the generation of real community, which requires not only a mixture of housing types and the people

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¹ Acts 4:32-35
² Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12
who occupy them, but the ability for all citizens, regardless of whether they can drive an automobile, to have access to all aspects of civic life.

The Church is in a position to take on an influential role in promoting good urban design. I would argue that it is consistent with the Church’s mission to take on such a role. When a church designs a new church building, it has an opportunity do something about the nature of community inhibited by contemporary suburban form. The Church could have a positive influence in the realm of these ideas in the world. It could provide its own members with a segment of the city possessing a physical form conducive to community, and by this activity provide witness to the world of the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of God lived out in a community of believers. Simultaneously, it can provide a model for others who are disappointed with the lack of community in their own quarter of the city to follow.

When such a new church building program arises, the church community would have to avoid the temptation to construct a suburban sprawl church complex, and instead find a way to make a genuine place in which the Kingdom can be lived out amongst the great mix of people who make up the Body. This may mean building in the middle of an existing neighborhood (where this is still allowed for church buildings), or it may mean incorporating other aspects of community life into the Master Plan beyond the sanctuary, fellowship hall, and classrooms. These other aspects might include mixed housing, a school, public spaces, and even commercial sites.

The form of a city and its architecture is an expression of its beliefs, and it also helps to shape the beliefs of those living in it. By participating in a renewal of
healthy urban design and architecture, the Church has the opportunity to declare its own values, and to promote those values within the city. In addition to community, these values include good stewardship, and care for those with which believers come in contact. It is appropriate that these values be expressed and lived out before the watching eyes of the world.

II. Mandates for Creating

I would like to say that the Protestant Church stands ready and able to take up the mantle of traditional urbanism, as well as art and architecture, and add its part toward the development of fine creations in these fields. The truth is, however, that the Protestant Church has essentially allowed its abilities in these fields to atrophy, and, more importantly, has become convinced that these are not areas of importance in which to expend energy. It is true that there are signs of increased interest in these subjects, but much of the energy exerted in the arts by these small pockets within the Church generally show little interest in learning directly from the wisdom of the centuries of artists and architects who have come before.

I would like to examine the question of why the Church should be interested in art, architecture, and urbanism, and specifically, why it should aspire to produce the highest quality products in those fields. The Church possesses a mandate and several models for human creations, though it often acts as though it has lost or forgotten them.

The command given in Genesis 1:28 to fill the earth and subdue it is often considered as a cultural mandate. Architect Daniel Lee has said,
The Creation Mandate in Genesis invites us to create a righteous civilization, which includes works of artistry and architecture. As the queen of the arts, architecture provides shelter but also serves an artistic and civic role expressing through metaphor and symbol the nature of the institutions contained within its walls.3

Having been placed in the Garden, humans are given not only the ability, but the charge to fill the earth; to reorganize and recreate the natural world into a built world. We can call this built world a City when we mean by that word the whole of the ideas, activities, and products of humankind. It is, for the sake of the immediate discussion, a synonym for culture. All of our cultural activities are a ‘filling’ in, in the sense of adding to, the original Creation.4

The reason for connecting culture to the term City is to aid in understanding an important model for the Church of human activity on this earth, given to both Isaiah5 and John.6 Both were shown an image of future glory in the form of a city: a New Jerusalem. As Richard Mouw,7 Eric Jacobsen,8 and others have stated, the Bible begins with a Garden and ends with a City. Instead of a return to raw nature, Isaiah and John are shown a final transforming, but not eradication, of the ‘filling’ accomplished by humans. This is important, because it demonstrates the scope of that transforming act, and therefore also the scope of the realm in which the Church is called to act.

5 Isaiah 60.
6 Revelations 21:2.
7 Richard Mouw. When the Kings Come Marching In. p.37.
In order to understand why this is so, it is necessary to examine one of the marks of the Christian faith: paradox. Pairs of apparently mutually exclusive precepts are held to be simultaneously true. God is understood to be both One and Three. Christ is both fully human and fully divine. The faithful are both freed from their fallen natures and yet still bound by them. Paradox expresses the element of mystery in the faith. Since it is beyond the ability of humans to fully understand a paradox rationally, faith in response to the mystery is required (though in other ways, paradoxically, faith is also based on reason and the remembrance of actual past experience). One of the essential paradoxes of the faith is the commonly referred to characterization of the time we live in as the ‘now and the not yet.’ The Kingdom of God is both among us, and not yet arrived. Its arrival is foreseen by Isaiah and John as the New City. If we realize that that City, like all societies, has an internal culture (or that, as stated earlier, the City is in fact a symbol of culture), the implication is that the Church can both anticipate a full blossoming of the culture of the City at some future point, while expecting that that same culture will experience a steady development in the here and now. This understanding brings with it a conclusion, if not with the force of a mandate, at least with the force of an inspiration, that the Church ought to participate in developing the culture of that City while still in the here and now.

One practical application of this discussion is that the Church has at least two reasons to value real cities. First, Cities are the concentrated centers of cultural activities from which, by transformation, the New City will arise. It is only by active participation in cities that the transformation can take place. It is not difficult
to recognize that our cities and the culture they engender are in need of transformation. The second reason is closely related to the first. Our understanding of the symbol of the New City as an ideal is enhanced by our actual experience with good cities. It follows from this that our ability to make and restore cities plays some small part in our ability to appreciate revelation.

Because of the intimate link established above between the Church’s cultural activities of art, architecture and urban design and the New City, it is perhaps appropriate in more ways than one to call the Church’s endeavors in these fields Civic Art. It is ‘civic’ not only in its attachment to the City of Man, in Augustine’s terminology, but also in its attachment to the City of God.

III. Authority

Before addressing the issues of the Church’s connection to tradition, and to symbolic representation, I need to briefly address the issue of authority, which vastly affects both of them. Authority, obviously, has been a matter of enormous importance in the Protestant Church since the very beginning of the Reformation, not only because it was a cause of the break from the Catholic Church, but because it became an early and constant matter at the center of all further splits and divisions. Of course, Protestants do recognize a central, unquestionable, Authority. They simply draw a large distinction between that Authority and any that are earthly. The freedom that such belief gave to the Protestant Church to restore certain elemental truths was accompanied by less desirable effects. Among these was a devaluing of
tradition and a devaluing of representation through sign and symbol. This occurred because Protestants have failed to realize that tradition and representation acquire their value not from any authority to which Protestants don’t adhere, but rather from that one Authority to which they do.

IV. Tradition

The topic of authority was discussed before addressing the topic of tradition because of their interconnectedness. Tradition is a form of authority, and is one that the Protestant Church is often quick to dismiss. In analogy, there are two authorities in art: Nature and Tradition. Each artist must decide whether one authority is higher, or if they are equal. The Church’s authorities, below its one Authority, are Scripture and tradition. Scripture is viewed as the depository of truth, and tradition is viewed as the depository of wisdom, but since wisdom depends on truth in order to be assessed, Protestants generally place Scripture on much higher ground. In fact, Protestantism is often characterized by a seeking for truth regardless of specific traditions. In the process, however, a generalized view of tradition tends to be devalued below its proper place.

While it is true that traditions need to be assessed, it does not follow that they therefore have no value. The best traditions are storehouses of wisdom developed by generations loyal to truth. The Church doesn’t create its theological understandings anew every generation. It bases them on a tradition. Likewise, Christians should not ignore tradition in art and architecture and their place in the Church. As a source of wisdom, tradition is part of the depository of ideas to which
Solomon admonished careful attention. In order to recapture this attention, however, the Church would need to turn from its acceptance of the current cultural tendency of devaluing tradition.

A Church that values its tradition would be marked by the close examination of precedent from within that tradition when making artistic and architectural decisions. It would also understand the full applicability of those precedents in new design, based on the view that we stand in an unbroken continuum with those who came before us. This continuum needs especially to be grasped within the Church’s own tradition, because it is the Church that holds that issues of faith and the human condition remain the same across the centuries, regardless of changes in society outside the Church. This view opposes the more common historicist view, which establishes impenetrable barriers between the work of the past and that of the present.

V. Sign, Symbol, and the Sacred

Architecture once gained much of its power from its signifying and symbolic representations. These types of representations require confidence in the authority of the things represented. This confidence is one of the things that has all but disappeared today, and, as already mentioned, it is even a problem in the Church. One realm in which it still exists in the Church is the confidence in that one Authority that gives the Church its reason for being. This should provide hope that representation can again find a home in the Church. Unfortunately, the Church has
also absorbed the modern world’s tendency to discard representation in its art and architecture.

Churches have traditionally made large use of sign and symbol to represent the important ideas valued by the Church. The reason they were so commonly used, and the reason the Church should reintroduce them, is that sign and symbol have always been part of humanity’s contact with its highest Authority. God instituted their use to combat one of the most enduring marks of humanity, forgetfulness, by pointing to things difficult to see, in the case of signs, and by making visible the otherwise invisible, in the case of symbols. The story of God’s relationship with the nation of Israel in the Old Testament is characterized by the perpetual forgetfulness of the Israelites, and the repeated attempts by God to institutionalize means of remembrance for them of who He is, what He has done for them, and what He expects of them.

One of the most important models for symbolic representation, as well as for art and image-making in general, is the Incarnation. By it, the Logos was made into flesh, to speak real words. The invisible God made Himself visible so that we, made of matter and perceiving only matter, could see Him.

Iconoclasm, therefore, is a very dangerous attitude because it implicitly cuts at every use of representation, ultimately even those instituted by God to convey the invisible, including the Incarnation itself. Unfortunately, iconoclasm, as a recurring element of Protestantism, is still with us today. Early reformation iconoclasm was perhaps slightly less harmful than its current counterpart in Protestantism. The stark simplicity of whitewashed walls was at least meant to be symbolic of a simple
adherence to the essentials of the faith, while the lack of sign and symbol in the contemporary church is, at best, a reflection of the buildings and spaces of a very meager popular culture, for it is, unfortunately, from popular culture that the Church today takes much of its aesthetic cues.

A most special type of symbol is the sacred. A church building has traditionally been considered a sacred place. Protestants, however, have been reluctant to call their church buildings ‘sacred.’ They tend not to want to deem any physical place or object as sacred, for fear that it suggests that humans can make items, buildings, and places that possess special power, or that God is made to be more obligated to act on behalf of their owners. This apprehension, however, is based on a misunderstanding of the sacred, and in the end sadly excuses the discarding of much of the church’s own culture. ‘Sacred’ means set apart for a purpose. The sanctuary is set apart for the purpose of housing collective worship. This purpose requires certain physical conditions, which the architectural design provides, but its sacred nature is additionally made known through its symbolic form, clearly distinguishing it from the non-sacred. Churches are sacred not because the sites themselves are imbued with power, but because they are set aside for One who has power.

Similarly, we celebrate certain days of the year, such as Christmas and Easter, as holy days not because they are actually more divine than other days, but because we, as humans the way God made us, need to have days set apart for remembrance. This is why God set feast days for the Israelites, and we need them for the same reason. We also need sacred spaces set aside for the same reason.
They are not magical but they turn our mind toward things we otherwise tend to forget (even God Himself). They stand as a symbol of the holy, pointing their occupants to consider God. As Margaret Visser asserts, the church building is a remembrance. It shocks us into a memory of forgotten truth. Christians would do well to remember that Jesus cared deeply about sacrality, and saw the Temple as sacred, calling it “my Father’s house.”

Jesus also taught sacrality, and its purpose in aiding memory, directly: “Take, eat; this is my body” (Matt. 26:26). He referred to a special bread on a special occasion, not all bread at all times. Again, this is in keeping with the Old Testament feasts based on our human nature of forgetfulness. The sacraments of Baptism and Communion, most notably, are vastly important elements of the culture of the Kingdom of God, and suffer immeasurably from a turning away from the sacred by allowing their visual elements, the font and the altar table, to be either diminished or eliminated entirely. They suffer visually, and then, as a consequence, they suffer in our estimate of them. In the end, we suffer from their diminution. Baptism and Communion are signs of very serious truths and elements of the faith, and we, as forgetful humans, need constant reminders of those truths. Baptism is a sign of our justification. Remembering our baptism is a comfort of the objectivity of justification. Baptism is a means of enjoying God’s grace. Downplaying it robs us of a great benefit. Likewise, communion is a sign of our sanctification, a reminder

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10 John 2:16.
of Christ’s continuing presence with us, of our constant need of Him, and of the
daily sustenance He gives us.

A common Protestant response to this type of discussion of the sacred is that
a large number of people to whom the Church reaches out are repelled by visually
blatant sacred space. But it might be more correct to say that they are repelled not
by the visual elements in and of themselves, but rather by connotations they receive
in their presence, based on past experiences with churches that make use of such
forms. It is no secret that many churches evoke more of a deadness than the life that
should be induced by their activities. The solution to this problem, however, is to
find a way to reinvigorate these churches, rather than to discard the symbolic and
sacred elements which have traditionally played such an integral part in the Church.
This latter strategy has been the one commonly encouraged by theorists such as E.A.
Sovik in his endorsement of the ‘non-church,’ and adopted by so many churches in
past years. What must be recognized is that the purposeful creation of ‘non-
churches’ abandons much of the vital culture of the Church, leaving only a feeble
semblance of culture in its place. Avoiding the conscious use of symbol in the
contemporary non-church reduces the significance that the building can have. If the
church is modeled on an office park in scale, layout, and constructional detail, it will
have as much significance as an office park and will lack the capacity to symbolize
the sacred.

The discussion of the culture of the Church should be an important one for
Protestants. Much thought is given these days by Protestants to the issue of how the
Church ought to relate to the culture around it, and when the issue is phrased in this
way, with the Church set up in opposition to the culture of the world, the nature of the relationship is already half established. In addressing the question of how Christ and the Church participate in culture, many Protestants seem to believe that they participate essentially as aliens. This view is perhaps most famously elaborated by Richard Niebuhr. In his important book, *Christ and Culture*, he lays out five common, and often intermingled, categories of relation between Christ, or the Church, and culture. While helpful in describing the complexity of views held by Christians, Niebuhr’s work essentially exhibits a common trait among Protestants: holding to the notion of Christ and culture in opposition. Even when discussing the category of The Christ of Culture, a view in which Christ is seen as a prime contributor to culture, closely allied with all the best elements of culture, and, in fact, supreme presider over it, He is, by Niebuhr’s own view, a watered down, fictitious Christ. The real Christ couldn’t be so intimately linked to so much secular culture. Central to his analysis is an equating of culture with what is often called the ‘world’ in the New Testament, meaning all the unredeemed elements of human activity. An understanding of his five categories, therefore, is helpful when considering the relationship of Christ and the Church to the secular world. It is helpful when recognizing the common balancing act performed by Christians who simultaneously desire to protect themselves from the ‘world’ defined above, and to participate in it, in order to be able to converse with those outside the Church. Both these desires are admonished in numerous passages of Scripture. Essentially, Niebuhr equates the world/culture as the City of Man, in which Christians see
themselves as pilgrims, and ‘Christ’ as the City of God, in which they see themselves as citizens.

What this consideration tends to leave out, however, is the examination of the culture of Christ and the Church. It is this inattention to the culture of the Church, pervasive in contemporary Protestantism, which, in part, leads to such feeble endeavors in many cultural arenas by Christians. High atop the list of these arenas in which Christians commonly exhibit little true skill are art and architecture. A Christian understanding of art and architecture is that they, like all products of creativity, are acts of re-creation. The original Creation was ex nihilo, creation out of nothing, while all of ours is re-assembly of what already exists. Originality, therefore, could be defined as re-assembly which has never been seen before, or re-assembly of elements more disparate than has been tried before.

Returning now to the issue of symbolism, we can see that a recovery within the Church of the valuing of symbolic representation would instill a call to work of a higher caliber. When we stand in awe of the artwork of another, it reminds us of the awe we owe to the work of God because it is a re-enactment of His creation. It is a token (a mirroring, a resonance) of the awe to be paid to God’s creation, and implies that art and all creative endeavors should be excellent.

VI. Beauty

Another belief that the Church holds, but needs to fully recover in its relation to what is built, is the importance of beauty. Beauty has been so far cast away in past decades that humanity’s aesthetic longings, instilled deeply by the Creator, have
had to be satiated by beauty’s illegitimate cousin, subjective pleasure. It is certainly true that beauty will produce pleasure in the viewer, but it will do so because it is first beautiful, not because it caters to the cravings for pleasure for its own sake.

The path to beauty from a Christian standpoint is again linked to the conception of creative acts as re-enactment of the original Creation. Artists and architects learn the principles of beauty by studying those principles exemplified in the created order. Daniel Lee has said,

The mind of our Maker is manifest in the creation. When we draw from the ordering principles of the architect of the cosmos, we establish a setting in which beauty can emerge. Alas, these principles have been abandoned in our generation. But our buildings, whether in our cities or countryside must again quake with intimations of God's great Glory through their magnificent beauty, embodiment of eternal principles in fine proportions, a sublime harmony of parts, and carefully crafted, appropriate materials.

The discernment of these principles is a complex and difficult process, and Christians can advance their pursuit of them by learning not only from theorists who have drawn them out from nature over the centuries, but also from practitioners who have shown their efficacy. For once artists and architects learn to create beauty, their creations teach others to discern beauty in general, both human-made and God-made.

VII. Truth and Narrative

One value to which the Church has held tight, nearly without exception, because it is so central to the faith, is that of truth. One result of this hold on truth is that the Church must stand strong against one of the dominant patterns of current

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thought, the mistrust of any claim to a metanarrative that is objectively true and free from the subjective desires for power or authority from its claimants. Christian truth makes that very claim. The Church takes the position that humans can now only see revelation as “…in a mirror dimly…” but that the truth exists nonetheless. One thing of which the Church can be certain is the nature of the narrative that is both true and encompasses all truth, and which forms the Church’s own identity. It is a narrative with a beginning and an end, and the certain, though rocky, progressive passage from the one to the other is the framework for the Church’s own journey. The possession of such a narrative is crucial to any meaningful production and creation.

MacIntyre has explained the importance of understanding the inherent narrative structure of human life. He describes how activities, which he calls ‘practices,’ have both internal and external goods. Practices include such things as the arts, sciences, games, and political activities in the classical sense. Their internal goods are benefits realized in the pursuit of excellence, which he equates with virtue. He gives chess as an example. Its internal goods are the intellectual skills acquired by learning to play well. Its external goods are things that might be received, such as fame, prestige, and other compensations not internal to the nature of the game, and therefore not related to virtue. MacIntyre goes on to explain that the viewing of life as a narrative with a telos, or orientation toward a future end or goal, directs the limited goods of practices toward real good. Those who are confident of the story of which they are a part have an advantage in restoring traditional art and

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13 1 Corinthians 13:12.
architecture, because conceiving life as a narrative makes their practice meaningful in a way consistent with a pre-Modern notion of those practices.

VIII. Conclusion

I have argued that community, artistic activity, authority, tradition, representation, the sacred, beauty, and narrative are central to the restoration of art and architecture that draws from and builds upon the best of the past. The Church needs to recognize that there is a disconnection between the view that it has held throughout the centuries regarding these ideas and the art and architecture in which it currently participates. While the Church has not consciously discarded these ideas, it has lost clarity about them. Because of this, there is a good chance it needs only to be reminded of them. This needs to be done not primarily for the consequences for art and architecture, but for the higher reasons internal to the Church’s faith. It should be an expected and welcomed result, however, that this memory will affect the quality of the Church’s culture, of which art and architecture are a part.
CHAPTER 3

PROTESTANT CHURCH PRECEDENTS

The purpose of the church is to be the body of Christ in this world. From the beginning of the Reformation, Protestants have developed a variety of church plans, either newly built or adapted from existing cathedrals, which embodied new views on the best way to live out this purpose, especially in the area of worship. In recent years, new church forms have been developed which, again, reflect new views on the nature of the Church. Some of these views, however, are arguably contrary to a healthy understanding of the Church.

Since the beginning of the Reformation, there has been a shift in emphasis in Protestant worship services from sacred space and objects and sacramental activities toward the activities of preaching and singing as the centerpieces of worship. This shift brought with it an architectural change in focus towards the pulpit, combined with a seating arrangement likewise focused on the pulpit. Eventually, certain Protestant traditions eliminated even the pulpit, leaving a stage for preacher and choir as the remaining focal point, and a new seating arrangement more and more akin to secular auditoriums. The purpose of this arrangement has been to create a space less intimidating for those who have an aversion to traditional sanctuaries. It is also designed to provide each congregant a comfortable spot with an unobstructed
view of the stage, in which he/she can participate in the service by joining emotionally and spiritually in the performances and teachings coming from the stage, and physically joining in the worship of song. In the end, however, the Church may be discarding its own internal culture, and therefore much of the richness that it would otherwise have to offer to those entering its doors.

Protestants, early on, sought to recover New Testament liturgical practices. They wanted to eliminate some of the distinction between clergy and laity, not only in the way in which the liturgy was practiced, but in the arrangement of the liturgical space itself. This, they felt, was more in keeping with early Christian services that took place in homes. The tendency, then, was to downplay a separation between the sanctuary with its altar, where the important act of communion took place, and the congregation. These efforts were generally shaped, however, by the medieval practices with which early Protestants were accustomed. Luther, in fact, maintained many medieval arrangements. German Lutherans took from earlier parish churches a longitudinal plan and honorific placement of altar, pulpit and baptismal font. [see figure 1 - Lutheran longitudinal church] One innovative design developed by Lutherans was the L-shape church building, with a double nave, still focused on the three liturgical centers. [see figure 2 - Lutheran L-shaped church]

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The Reformed tradition, in the Netherlands and Scotland, was the source of more radical changes.\footnote{James White. \textit{Protestant Worship and Church Architecture: Theological and Historical Considerations.} Eugene, Ore. : Wipf and Stock Pub., 2003. p. 89-93.} The pulpit became the dominant, and often the only permanent, liturgical center, because of the heightened reverence for the Word of God preached. Reformers also modeled a common form after certain earlier parish churches, or after the lay portion of cathedrals, with the pulpit placed along the long side of a rectangular nave, and seating arranged concentrically around it. [see figure 3 - Reformed side pulpit sanctuary] The other common form for Reformers was the centrally planned church, which also accommodated seats close to the pulpit. [see figure 4 - Reformed central-plan church] The common form for Free Churches was a square or short rectangle with a high, elaborate pulpit on one side, and seating again arranged around it. [see figure 5 - Free Church] These churches also utilized the Protestant innovation of galleries on three sides, often in multiple tiers, to bring as many congregants as possible close to the pulpit. The French Huguenots apparently used this type of arrangement, as well as Free Church congregations in Amsterdam and elsewhere. Christopher Wren single-handedly impacted subsequent Protestant churches with the design of his Anglican parish churches in London. He studied carefully the auditory requirements of size and arrangement to allow the sermon to be clearly heard by every congregant. [see figure 6 - Wren parish church] America became the home of a long string of influential developments. Early puritan/congregational churches had small square plans similar in arrangement to European Free Church predecessors. [see figure 7 - American meeting house] In the eighteenth century, the most familiar American development was the pattern,
inspired by the auditory churches of Wren, of altar and pulpit placed at the end of a rectangular plan with modified chancel, galleries on three sides, and exterior portico and tower influenced by James Gibb. [see figure 8 - First Church of Christ, New Haven]

At the Chatham Street Chapel and the Broadway Tabernacle in New York, Charles Finney experimented with a theater-style arrangement that supported his revivalist preaching style. [see figure 9 - Chatham Street Chapel] [see figure 10 - Broadway Tabernacle] Finney separated clergy and laity into performer and audience, with a large stage for the minister and choir. Finney’s revivalist preaching style, along with the auditorium arrangement, emphasized a response of intense feelings in the individuals of the congregation. Most congregations in America, however, ignored Finney’s theater arrangement at the time, and the next ubiquitous protestant church form was inspired by Gothic architecture and England’s Cambridge Camden Society. [see figure 11 - Clinton Avenue Congregational Church] Though far removed from Finney’s revival services, the romantic high liturgy services held in these churches also stressed feeling and individuality. This view of worship, centered on the emotional experience of individual worshippers, became a dominant one in America. It contrasted with the more traditional Protestant notion of worship as primarily work done obediently in God’s service, not as a means to achieve a standing before Him, but in response to divine love.

According to Richard Kieckhefer, there are three broad traditions of Protestant church design. Classic sacramental churches trace their tradition back

to the basilica plan, with a nave, chancel and altar. [see figure 12 - Classic sacramental church] The processional, hierarchical nature of these churches continued to be used by the Lutherans, as mentioned above. Classic evangelical churches, of the Reformers and of Wren, are designed for the centrality of preaching, with seats arranged around a pulpit. [see figure 13 - Classic Evangelical Church] These churches tend to be less symbolically adorned, but they often, like sacramental churches, make symbolic use of height and light. In acoustics, while sacramental churches typically have long reverberation times suited to the enhancement of music, evangelical churches have short reverberation times suited to the spoken word. The third, and most recent tradition, will be discussed later.

The American churches of the mid-nineteenth century mentioned above that were influenced by the Cambridge Camden Society were sacramental churches, even though most American Protestants, if asked to articulate their faith, would not have mentioned the hierarchical representations of these churches. It is important to note, however, that that fact alone should not preclude Protestants from using such a form. As Kieckhefer asserts, the meaning of the liturgical form of a church is affected by its liturgical use. 20 While many read the placement of the altar at the far end of a chancel as symbolic of a remote God, in a manner inconsistent with Protestant theology, this does not need to be the case. Protestants do hold to the transcendence of God, but they also hold that He is approachable. This latter belief can still be embodied in a sacramental church, if the congregation is allowed to

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approach the altar. This, of course, is exactly what has traditionally been understood to take place when the congregation’s representative, the priest, met God at the altar.

This view of the sacramental church, however, has only periodically been one that American Protestants have been willing to embrace. After the Civil War, a more common form, sheathed in an exterior design purposefully reminiscent of medieval architecture, made use of the auditorium arrangement of the sanctuary encouraged by Finney fifty years earlier. This was a new formulation of the evangelical church, though it maintained the emphasis on the preaching of the gospel by orienting the seats around a stage for the minister and choir.

Though Ralph Adams Cram, and others, led a return to classic sacramental churches in the early decades of the twentieth century, the evangelical form of church has continued to be built by Protestants to the present day. Changing circumstances in recent years, however, have brought about another Protestant church form. As more and more Americans have moved into ever-expanding contemporary suburban developments, they have been forced to confront the problems of community inherent in that suburbia discussed earlier. The church in the suburban landscape has become an automobile destination, drawing congregants from a very large distance circle, and therefore the majority of the congregants would never meet each other outside of the church. Kieckhefer has characterized his third category of church as one which attempts to specifically address this issue of communal loss. He calls this form the Modern Communal church. Communal churches serve an emphasis on gathering people together for worship. [see figure 14 - Modern Communal Church] They are generally built for congregations not
already a tight social community, and so are provided with a large social space at the entry to encourage interaction before entry into the worship space. The congregation is given an added sense of community by an arrangement in which seats are turned to face each other to emphasize group identity.

To summarize Kieckhefer’s three categories of churches by way of simple characteristics (though any actual church will inevitably contain elements of more than one category), it is possible to say that a Classic Sacramental church orients the congregation principally (physically and symbolically, and, usually, liturgically) toward the altar; a Classic Evangelical church orients the congregation principally to the pulpit (and thereby to the Word of God); and the Modern Communal church orients the congregants primarily to each other.

An example of a church form which does, in fact, contain elements of two of Kieckhefer’s categories, and, perhaps, adds its own unique characteristics, is the form now commonly known as the megachurch. [see figure 15 - Willowcreek Community Church] It is so called because of the vast number of congregants served on a given Sunday. This number commonly runs in the thousands. What distinguishes these churches from other large churches, which may have historically also served large numbers, is the distance traveled by many to attend. Like Modern Communal churches, megachurches draw their congregations from vast suburban regions, and often make use of purposeful communal spaces. Like the auditorium form of evangelical churches, however, they also have vast worship spaces based on a theater-seating arrangement. Unlike Classic Evangelical churches, however, megachurches carefully eliminate any traditionally symbolic or sacred elements
from their designs. By this purposeful elimination, they take part in the devaluing of
the culture of the Church which the earlier part of this thesis has attempted to argue
is detrimental to the whole life of the Church. The great danger of this activity in
the megachurch is that this church form has become a dominant, if not the dominant,
model for new church design in Protestant America today.

With the change in focus for the Church within the city from neighborhood
parish to consumer-sensitive religious marketplace targeting specific social groups,
churches have tended to slowly barricade themselves from their immediate
neighborhood, or to withdraw themselves from neighborhoods altogether. Such is
the case with the megachurch, which, as stated, is characteristically an automobile
destination, physically separate from any residential neighborhood to which it
specifically belongs. This has had the effect of cutting off the church from the city it
inhabits, thereby breaking the connection by which it could have a positive influence
in the lives of those around it. The megachurch impacts the lives of the thousands of
congregants who enter its doors, but it does so in way that promotes, rather than
discourages, the emotive, individualistic, consumer-oriented culture of false
community, rather than offering an alternative based on the values argued for in the
earlier chapter of this thesis.

The offer of an alternative will form the basis of the design, described in the
next chapter, for a new church building.
CHAPTER 4

DESIGN PROJECT

I. Project Description

Drawing on the idea that the best Civic Art draws wisdom from the best achievements of the past while addressing present contingencies, and that the Church’s valuing of the principles behind this view will help to generate Civic Art that stands as an image of the truths of the faith and the goodness and beauty of God, I will now proceed to describe a design for a specific Protestant church which incorporates the three practices of art, architecture, and urban design.

The church, Covenant Presbyterian Fellowship, in Santa Rosa, California, has outlined a description of its foreseeable needs, which will serve as the basis for this program. This description includes a statement on the general nature of the church facility the leadership desires. They envision a “facility in an architectural style consistent with religious buildings in a rural/residential setting, similar to the wineries of Sonoma County that enhance and reflect the area’s natural beauty.” In other words, they seek a design that draws inspiration from three levels of context. The first is the tradition of ecclesiastical architecture, especially those examples that share the semi-rural district of the site. The second is the specific natural environment of the region in which the site rests. The third is the tradition of
building in the region, especially those examples that successfully integrate themselves into their environment.

Covenant Presbyterian is seeking a 25,000 sq. ft. facility, situated on its 4 ½ acre site. The following is a listing of programmatic needs generated by the eldership:

- Sanctuary: Seating to accommodate 350, a large narthex for fellowship, and several smaller rooms (cry room, Sacristy, storage room, sound room), totaling 8000 sq. ft.
- Vestry and Classrooms: 10 classrooms and 10 to 13 staff rooms used for study, counseling and church administration plus circulation and storage. 12,000 sq. ft.
- Fellowship Hall, Vestry and Classroom building (including Preschool): Sized to accommodate seating for 400 for meals. Kitchen, sport court, and storage. 5000 sq. ft.
- Parking for 200 vehicles.
- Outdoor activities: Group games, such as volleyball, plus space for outdoor worship services.

The design I am proposing for this church is an alternative to the common church building project undertaken by Protestant congregations today. It is a design which attempts to address seriously the values of community, tradition, symbolic representation, and beauty.

II. Community Addressed

The site for Covenant Presbyterian Fellowship’s new building is a 4 ½ acre parcel along the eastern portion of Highway 12, also called Sonoma Highway, in Santa Rosa, California. The parcel, at the time of purchase, contained a single family
residence and a small residential outbuilding on its 4+ acres. The site therefore represents the type of property common, until recently, in the outer region of the city. Single and multiple acre properties such as this one have, in recent years, been purchased for suburban development. Nearly all such properties surrounding the site have already been developed.

Having already noted the impediments to community related to this type of suburban development, and the promotion of the culture of isolation, individualism, and consumerism that it engenders, my design attempts to create a place where more genuine community, as valued by the Church, can occur. Therefore, I propose that the church make its valuing of community manifest in the creation of a neighborhood center. This neighborhood center consists of a usable public space, fronted by the church building, and surrounded by a mixed range of residential units. The public plaza and green will be within easy walking distance of all the residences within the development, as well as those beyond it within a quarter-mile radius. This walkable access will be enhanced by the extension of an existing walking trail which extends into the nearby neighborhood, but currently ends a couple of hundred yards from the property owned by Covenant Presbyterian.

The neighborhood center would fulfill its civic role with the presence of an important civic building, the church, fronting the public plaza. Also fronting the plaza will be a flexible housing building, with commercial space on the ground floor and apartments on the upper floor. This brings necessary market activities in close proximity to the local residents, and with it, some of the motions of daily life into a single, coherent place.
III. Tradition Addressed

Though it would be a mistake to claim that there is a single suitable form for a Protestant church building, it would also be a mistake to claim that, therefore, any and all forms are equally appropriate. Because of the necessity to recover a sense of the sacred in our church buildings, as argued in a previous chapter, wisdom would dictate a serious investigation of church buildings which have been successfully raised as sacred buildings.

McKim, Mead and White’s Madison Square Presbyterian church served as a significant precedent for my design for a church building for Covenant Presbyterian. [see figure 16 – Madison Square Presbyterian Church] Being also a Presbyterian church, it was a particularly appropriate model. It demonstrated how a sanctuary could simultaneously recall the compact seating arrangement of early American meeting houses in a space made sacred by its clear cross-based floor-plan, and its dome, which both covers the space like the heavens, and provides a centralizing axis upwards. It was also generously adorned with iconographic ornament, adding to its readability as a sacred place.

The lineage of influence for McKim, Mead and White’s design for Madison Square Presbyterian church itself can be partially traced back to the parish churches of Sir Christopher Wren, which, as a body, had a great impact on the development of Protestant churches in America. Wren’s design for St. Stephen Walbrook, in particular, makes similar use of a shallow dome over a similarly sized sanctuary. [see figure 17 – St. Stephen Walbrook] It also, like Madison Square Presbyterian,
has a slightly greater length than width, which emphasizes a longitudinal axis from the entry to the altar, as a counterpoint to the centralizing tendency of the dome.

Figures 18 -20 depict other churches which have added further precedent to the ideas established by these two. The final series of images (figures 21 – 35) depict my design for Covenant Presbyterian Fellowship’s church building and surrounding neighborhood.
APPENDIX
Figure 1 – Lutheran longitudinal church
Figure 2 – Lutheran L-shaped church

Plans of ground floor and gallery of Evangelische Stadtkirche, Freudenstadt, with details of earlier furnishings, after survey in Der Kirchenbau des Protestantismus. Scale: 1:500.
Reconstruction of north elevation’s former aspect with original monumental windows and plan of seating accommodation before later changes. After earlier drawings in Gemeente Archief, The Hague. Scale: 1:500.

Figure 3 Reformed side pulpit sanctuary
Figure 4 Reformed central-plan church
Figure 5 Free Church

Interior of Remonstrants’ temple, Amsterdam, after installation of the organ. Copper engraving by C. Philips Jacobsz, 1771, after a drawing by H. Keun, 1770. Right margin: actual plan after a sketch by the author.
Figure 6 Wren parish church
Figure 7 American Meeting House
Figure 8 First Church of Christ, New Haven
Figure 9 Chatham Street Chapel

Chatham Theater, NY 1832
Figure 10 Broadway Tabernacle
Figure 11 Clinton Avenue Congregational Church
Figure 12 Classic Sacramental Church
Willow Creek opens its 7,200-seat auditorium.
Figure 16 Madison Square Presbyterian
Figure 17 St. Stephen Walbrook
Figure 20  Santa Maria Carceri
PROPOSAL FOR COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN FELLOWSHIP
SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA
BRIAN KRAMER
APRIL 2005

Figure 24 West Elevation
Figure 25 Court Section
Figure 26 Longitudinal Section
Figure 28 North, South and East Elevations
Figure 29 Mezzanine Plan
Figure 31 Lower Level Plan
Figure 33 View from the Southwest
Figure 34 Narthex and Sanctuary
Figure 35 Courtyard and Fellowship Hall


