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Abstract

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Constantine's *Edict of Milan* transformed Christian worship and architecture from informal expressions into grandiose events. Protestant Reformers intended to counteract these measures and restore the nature of Christianity to what they felt was the purity of its origins. While they succeeded in creating shifts in religion, politics, and culture, the architectural manifestations of these ideas changed relatively little. Because Protestant ideology and architecture evolved to different degrees, the two are now left expressing significantly disparate messages. Through a close examination of Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church, this thesis proposes a design solution that sees worship space support the religious ideals practiced within it.

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Introduction

This thesis addresses a long-standing hypocrisy. As a whole, the values of Protestant ideology are not reflected in the values of Protestant worship architecture. Today, most church buildings reflect an influence of Imperial Rome that contradicts tenants of Protestant Christianity. This is an important issue considering all that is communicated through worship architecture. It instructs people how to practice a religion. It helps define what worship is and influences the attitudes of people while they worship. Like a piece of advertisement, sacred spaces express messages that shape the way the outside world views a religion. Because an architectural vestige may survive much longer than its builders, it also affects how history remembers a belief system. If a religion is serious enough to establish ideals, that religion should want to do its best to communicate those ideals to the world through its words, actions, and architecture. This thesis proposes that the Western church type misrepresents Protestant Christianity and thereby does it a disservice.

The document begins by demonstrating the significance of space to religion and worship. After discussing examples from several different world religions the paper examines major precedents of Hebrew sacred space. Shifts in Jewish architectural expression are shown to have coincided with, and sometimes given rise to changes in worship practice and religious ideology. The document draws this history together by detailing Christianity's relationship to Jewish thought and architecture. A case is made that Christianity began as a critique of the Jewish faith model rather than a unique and original belief system. Christianity's building within the framework of Judaism is later used in the thesis to inform a strategy for church design.

The nature of Early Christian worship and architecture is described to reveal Rome's influence on its evolution. An overview of the Protestant Reformation then

shows how religious, political, and cultural changes were never fully realized in church architecture. A disparity between the messages of Protestant philosophy and sacred spaces is investigated through the study of a particular Methodist church in Baltimore. A history of the denomination and church building are presented. Finally, a design solution is proposed that sees worship architecture reflect the philosophy of the religion practiced within it.

The design solution reinterprets the function, form, and fabrication of the Western church type. Just as Christianity has built new rituals within the framework of older ones, this church design is constructed within the literal framework of an existing church. Strategic walls and ironwork are left as visual reminders among the new structure of what once was. Issues of openness, charity, and environmental stewardship inform programmatic and formal design decisions. The product of this exercise is a new building, built within an older one, which more accurately conveys Methodist ideology.

Space, Worship, & Religion

The purposes, physical properties, and creation processes behind architecture are often the most visible and enduring expressions of a religion. Sacred spaces communicate values to those worshipping within them as well as the outside public. They aim to broadcast the ideals of a belief system and to offer a method for practicing it. Because of this, worship spaces should be considered sculptural sermons with all the influence of a preacher behind a pulpit. The relationship between space, worship, and religion can be considered in respect to three issues of architecture: function, form, and fabrication. The following examples illustrate the significance of these issues in the context of different religions.



Salat on the Ganges

A Muslim boatman faces Mecca as he begins an evening prayer. In this situation, time, orientation, and program are the most important spatial factors.

Function

In Islam, worship space is defined primarily by the activities taking place within it. The five daily prayers known as the *Salat* focus on time, geographical orientation, and method. Whether the rituals are performed in a mosque, an office, or outside is not of concern. Prayers are conducted at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and night. The process can be performed individually or collectively and involves several cycles of standing,

bowing, prostrating, and sitting. Before orienting one's self towards the *Ka'bah* in Mecca a subject must complete an ablution by purifying heart and mind, and cleansing body and clothes.¹



Ming Period Mountain View

Feng Shui advocates that a properly designed building exists in harmony with nature. In many cases, the form of a structure can affect the spiritual health of those that dwell within it.

Form

In Chinese philosophy, the location, form, and orientation of a structure determines much of its spiritual effectiveness. The earth is thought to be crossed by lines of energy known as *ch'i*, where every place marks a unique intersection in this grid possessing both *yin* (passive) and *yang* (active) energy. At the heart of Chinese philosophy is a will to find a balance between these two forces in life, health, and architecture. *Feng Shui* employs astrological, psychic, and physical sciences to determine how balance is achieved. Spatial forms that work with rather than against the natural energies of the land are thought to be virtuous and yield good fortune.²

¹ Sakr, 3-4.

² Mann, 77-82.



Sabbath Lake Meetinghouse

To the Shakers, the construction of this meetinghouse was considered as much worship as was the services held within it.

Fabrication

In Shaker philosophy, the process of working, particularly craftsmanship, was considered worship. Shakers believed that making furniture was done in the service of God. For this reason they rarely signed their products. Shakers thought God dwelt in the details of their work so they strove not to produce more or faster, but only better. The construction of their meetinghouses, in particular, was considered a sacred rite. Construction was often carried out at night so outsiders couldn't look upon them. However, as seriously as these people took the quality of their products it was within the practice of making them that they believed one drew closer to heaven.³

³ Burns, *The Shakers*.

Precedents of Hebrew Worship Space

The impact of space on worship and religion is demonstrated poignantly in the history of Judaism. The creation and devastation of Hebrew sacred spaces prompted perhaps the most profound turns in the practices and beliefs of the faith. Because Christianity is rooted in the history of Judaism, a thorough study of the western church type must begin with Judaism, well before the birth of Christ.

The First Marks of Sacred Space

Perhaps the first instance of Hebrews designating space as holy, or belonging to God, came at a time when they were held captive in an enemy land. As the Spirit of God brought about the final plague in Egypt, Hebrew families protected themselves by placing lambs' blood above their front doors. Though this didn't radically alter the physical space inside, it was believed to have created a spiritual purity. As their security and independence grew, the manifestations of Hebrew worship spaces became more overt and tactile.⁴

The Hebrew Tabernacle

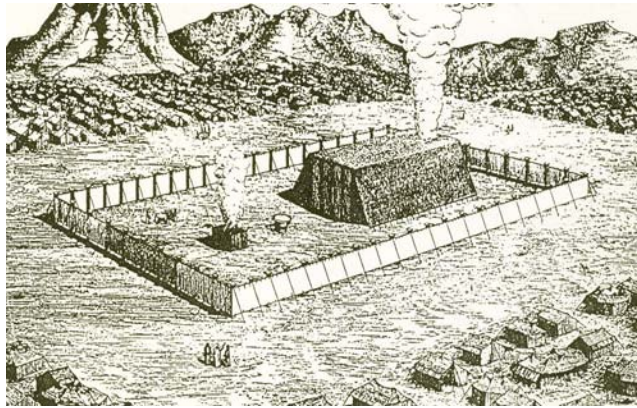
Also referred to as the *Tent of Meeting*, the Tabernacle was constructed in the months following the Hebrews' flight from Egypt. According to the author of *Exodus*, the design, material specifications, and names of the tabernacle craftsmen were all revealed to Moses by God at Mount Sinai. The structure was meant to be a portable dwelling place for the Spirit of God and those relics held sacred to the Hebrew people. During their forty-year desert trek to the "Promised Land", over two million Israelites depended on the

⁴ Ex 12:1-28

priestly tribe of Levites to set up and transport the Tabernacle wherever the pillar of cloud and fire lead them.⁵

The tent structure was roughly fifteen meters long by five meters high and wide. The framework consisted of forty-eight gold leafed acacia boards held together by five rods. The roof was composed of four layers of covering:

- an outer layer of skins coming from either badgers, seals, or dolphins
- a layer of rams' skins dyed red
- a layer of woven goats' hair
- an inner layer of cherubim embroidered linen which also served as the ceiling surface



Hebrew Tabernacle

To the Hebrews, this tent was revered as the dwelling place of God.

A linen veil subdivided the interior of the tent into two westerly oriented spaces.

The Holy Place was the initial room where priests would perform rituals on a regular basis. It contained a lamp stand that kept lit a perpetual flame, a *shewbread* table where weekly bread offerings were left, and an incense altar.

The Holy of Holies was the innermost room where the high priest would sprinkle goat's blood on the Ark of the Covenant once each year during the atonement ceremony.⁶

Surrounding the tent was an outer court measuring nearly fifty meters long by twenty-five meters wide. Fifty-six silver-capped pillars were braced with ropes to line this area and hang a 2½-meter high white linen curtain. Beyond the colorful linen entry

⁵ Barrow, 1-35.

curtain the eastern half of the outer court contained an altar for burnt sacrifices and a *laver* (brass basin), for priests to wash their hands and feet before entering the tent. The tent was situated in the western half of the court.⁷

Although the tabernacle was portable, it marked a first and crucial step in localizing God to a single earthly place. It provided a spatial hierarchy that let the Hebrews focus their prayers and sacrifices around a single terrestrial object, while also setting an example for greater organization within the religious leadership. Because God came to dwell in a solitary building, the Tabernacle and its successors became the only places Jews could offer their sacrifices. Yet the more concrete the Jews made the dwelling place of God, the more they risked in the event of its destruction.

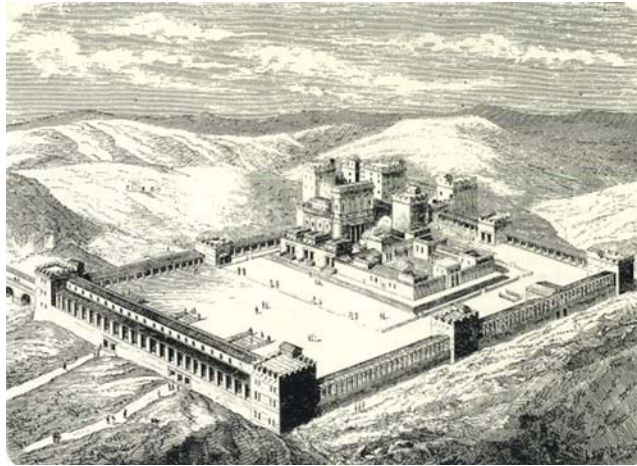
Solomon's Temple

Nearly three hundred years after reaching the "Promised Land", the Israelites began to construct a more extraordinary and permanent place for God and sacrifice. Building upon the preparations made by his father, David, King Solomon chose to employ higher quality Phoenician architects, craftsmen, and materials to produce what would be the most extravagant monument of its time. He pressed more than thirty thousand of his own people into forced labor importing stone and wood from neighboring countries. The project took seven years to complete and was dedicated c.953 BC. Though no physical evidence of the Temple has survived, archaeologists have determined its design was quite similar to the native temples of its Phoenician builders.⁸

The temple sanctuary stood on a two-meter plinth and measured approximately thirty meters long by ten meters wide and fifteen meters high. Two large bronze pillars guarded the portico and its equally impressive doors. Thirty smaller storage chambers

⁶ Ex 25:1-27:19.

reached three stories flanking all but the eastern façade of the sanctuary. Subsequently, the only natural light to reach the interior did so through lattice windows near the ceiling.⁹



Solomon's Temple

This monument adapted features from the Hebrew Tabernacle into a more permanent structure.

Substituting a wall in place of a curtain, the Temple subdivided itself in much the same way as the Tabernacle. The two structures shared common spatial organizations, proportions, and orientation, though the Temple interior was encrusted almost entirely in gold.

The Holy Place remained a space for frequent rituals, though it contained 10 lamp stands and 12 *shewbread* tables in addition to the incense altar.

The Holy of Holies also maintained its function while its interior form evolved into a cube.¹⁰

Outside an outer and inner court encircled the temple structure. The inner court contained a *laver* and burnt offering altar much larger than those of its portable predecessor.

⁸ Dolphin, 3-5.

⁹ Falconer, 2-6.

¹⁰ 1Ki 5:1-6:38.

Solomon's Temple further localized the dwelling place of God by giving it a permanent address. The Temple Mount became the holiest place on earth to the Jewish people, thus extending the concept of its sacred hierarchy to geography. Comfort and security came as they saw the dwelling place of God take a stronger, more fixed form. The statement of power made by this monument led to more emphasis being placed on the practice of sacrificing. Jewish worship became synonymous with Temple sacrifices and to a large degree the fate of the religion rested on the survival of the building. With no Temple there could be no sacrifices.

Once the Temple of Solomon was finished and the relics had been moved within it, the Hebrews chose to dismantle the Tabernacle one last time. They likely stored it in a chamber beneath the Temple Mount where it may remain to this day. Solomon's Temple stood for nearly four hundred years before it was plundered and burned down during the Babylonian siege of c.586 BC.¹¹

Development of the Synagogue

After the destruction of Jerusalem, King Nebacanezer enslaved most of the Hebrew population and brought them back to Babylon. Living without the Temple during the Babylonian Exile left the Jewish people facing a major theological dilemma. However, through this crisis the religion developed both a new form of worship architecture and a strategy for surviving oppression. The destruction of Solomon's Temple meant that there was no longer a suitable place for Jewish priests to offer sacrifices to God. In lieu of this Jewish people preserved their faith by worshipping and studying on those days they met together at the market.¹²

¹¹ Falconer, 7.

¹² Scheinerman, 1.

From these less formal meetings grew the framework for synagogue worship. After Cyrus liberated the Hebrew people, many of them decided to either remain in Babylonia or journey somewhere other than Israel. Those who did return to Israel built two more incarnations of the Temple. But it was the synagogue that prevented the Jewish faith from evaporating as a result of geographic disbursement. Wherever Jewish people settled they adapted to the local culture while still creating their own sacred space for worship, civic meeting, and study. Throughout history synagogues have tended to discretely blend into their surroundings. Early on an attitude towards worship developed wherein the building was no longer a principal aspect. More priority was given to the *Sefer Torah* (sacred texts) held within the synagogue and the activities performed there. The synagogue would introduce the idea of placelessness in Judaism.¹³



Greek Synagogue

Like other synagogues, this building was designed to blend into its surrounding architectural fabric.

By the 1st century AD, the influence of the synagogue typology rivaled that of Herod's new temple. According to the *Talmud* sacred text, at the time the Romans destroyed the last Temple in 70 AD, there were synagogues located across the Near East and North Africa. Jerusalem alone accounted for nearly four hundred synagogues at this

¹³ Scheinerman, 1.

time. After the Temple was destroyed, synagogue services came to symbolically replace the offerings once sacrificed to God. From the European ghettos created during The Plague to the concentration camps instituted under Nazi Germany, Jews have managed to establish synagogues in even the bleakest of circumstances. The adaptiveness of these structures is largely responsible for allowing Judaism to survive in societies where its followers have so often been outnumbered and severely persecuted.¹⁴ It also transformed Jewish worship from Temple sacrifices to social gatherings of prayer, study, and fellowship.

¹⁴ Scheinerman, 1.

Christ as Architect of Space and Religion

By working inside the Jewish theological system, Jesus and His disciples were able to communicate with people using a familiar language while also keeping their ideas from appearing too alien. It allowed early Christianity to associate itself with the modesty of a people held captive under Roman rule. Because Jewish society and the Roman Empire each stretched across several continents, this theological vehicle allowed for a quicker and greater disbursement of ideas. By building a new religion within the framework of an older one, Jesus and His disciples were able to employ and associate their theology with that of Judaism while also providing something of an insider's critique on other aspects they wanted to revise. In addition, a case could be made that Christianity's Hebrew roots helped to preserve the Jewish way of life. Even as the Middle Ages saw terrible acts of Jewish persecution, due in part to its association with Christianity, Judaism survived in Europe when many "pagan" religions were squelched.

One of the most important changes brought about by Christianity is its reexamination of how righteousness is attained. In essence, the Christian message builds on top of the Hebrew equation (honoring the *law* = righteousness) and its antecedent (sinfulness of people = damnation). It follows this with another equation (Jesus' damnation fulfills the debt of sin = righteousness to people). By this, Christianity works within the same constructs of Jewish logic, but provides an alternate solution to the problem of sin. In essence it suggests that God has taken the punishment for human transgressions. The only aspect of the Jewish system it directly calls into question is the plausibility of a person living without sin.¹⁵

In addition to modifying core theological principles within the Jewish framework, Jesus also tackled the definition of the Messiah. According to Christianity,

¹⁵Jn 3:16.

the very identity of Jesus can be taken as a strong reinterpretation of the Jewish concept of the Savior. This image of the Messiah was prophesied as a powerful leader usually expected to hold a position similar to that of a king or warrior. Rather than discounting the Hebrew image, Jesus adjusted the definition of “powerful” and “leader” such that these words came to mean nearly the opposite of what they used to represent. “Power” came to characterize having favor with God or authority in some other world. Likewise, a “leader” was no longer personified by a victorious army general, but a martyr whose message stayed with the world long after He left it. So instead of creating a messiah from scratch, Christianity followed one that emerged from the foundation principle declared in Judaism.¹⁶

Speaking Through Space

In addition to dogmatic reinterpretations, Jesus and His disciples used architecture and space to modify an existing religious system. In fact the first story of the New Testament exemplifies this very thing.

As prophesied in Judaic texts, the Messiah was to be a descendant of King David. Because of his military triumphs, David was honored as Israel’s most beloved leader. He is said to have risen from meager beginnings to become the richest and most politically powerful man in the nation he helped to unite. Needless to say, the expectations of a messiah that was to come from the line of David entailed a birth story much different than what Christianity declared. The authors of the New Testament maintained that Jesus was the Savior and that He indeed came from the ancestry of King David. They even incorporated into their accounts a complete family lineage of Jesus’ earthly father, Joseph, which includes David and goes all the way back to Abraham, a patriarch to Islam as well as Judaism and Christianity. However, the specifics of the Christmas story present

¹⁶ Isa 42:1-4.

the Messiah in a far different light than what most Jewish people then anticipated. For although Joseph was a descendant of David, he hardly embodied the same qualities of power and leadership. Joseph was a carpenter and enjoyed little authority. So even though Christianity substantiated the facts of the Jewish prophecy, the materialization of these facts began to yield a much different result.¹⁷

As the New Testament records it, Jesus was born in David's hometown of Bethlehem as His parents, Mary and Joseph, traveled there to take part in the Roman census. This set up a situation wherein the Christian Messiah was an underprivileged stranger in the place where He belonged. Christian texts go on to tell of Joseph's and a pregnant Mary's arriving in Bethlehem only to find they had nowhere to stay. Eventually they found partial refuge in a manger. While archaeologists continue to debate whether this space refers to a separate outdoor structure or merely a corner of a domestic house, one thing that is established is that this manger was intended for livestock and not humans. Thus Christianity employs the typological associations of a manger to powerfully reinterpret part of the Jewish framework. Especially when juxtaposed against the implications of Bethlehem, the idea of the manger begins to say volumes about the simplicity, humility, and transient nature of a Christian God on earth. Here the religion utilizes architecture as a tool to transform prior expectations into its actuality of Christ.

Another example of Christianity using architecture in such a capacity deals with the idea of the Temple. Ever since the first Passover during Egyptian Captivity, Judaism has sought to localize the power of its God more and more. Before the Exodus, Jewish families separated their homes from those of the Egyptians by placing lambs' blood above their doorways. This demonstrated a tactic wherein a people could designate a space as pure or holy even when it stood on the land of an enemy captor. After the Exodus, Judaism revealed that God instructed His people, through Moses, to erect the

¹⁷ Lk 2:1-20.

Tabernacle. Though it was portable enough to move with the Jews along their forty-year desert trek, the Tabernacle marked an important step towards designating a single earthly place for God to dwell. Not only was this tent structure regarded as holy, but its innermost chamber was also said to be the literal resting-place of God. Once arriving at the “Promised Land” of Israel, the Jews undertook a building project that would provide a more extravagant and permanent address for the higher power. The Hebrew Temple would replace the Tabernacle both physically and religiously. Solomon, the son of King David, doubled the dimensions of the Tabernacle in the new structure he built on the most sacred site in Jerusalem. The Temple Mount is said by Jews and Christians to be the very spot Abraham was to sacrifice his son, Isaac. Muslims also hold this to be the place where God spoke to Muhammad.¹⁸

The significance of this location certainly didn’t escape the authors of the New Testament. What was then the third incarnation of the Hebrew Temple initially served as a backdrop where Jesus issued some of His first teachings. Later on it became much more relevant to Christian theology as it operated as the actual focal point of several other lessons. One such story involved Jesus entering the Temple complex and violently overturning the tables used by moneychangers. In His eyes commerce compromised the spirit of worship and should not be permitted in a place of prayer. Through this display Jesus temporarily modified the Temple space in order to express a theological objection. This instance didn’t call into question the Temple so much as the nature of how it was being used.

However, through these events Jesus came closer to altering foundation principles key to the Judaic framework of the Temple. In one episode recorded in Christian texts, Jesus tells His disciples that He would tear down and rebuild the Temple in three days time. While most of those who heard this took it at first as a physical threat,

¹⁸ Ex 25:1-27:19.

Christian theologians now agree that Jesus was referring to the righteousness equation wherein He descends into Hell for three days. If Jesus was only interested in His own religious system and not in modifying the one found in Judaism, there would be no cause for Him to say that He wants to *rebuild* the Temple.



The Last Supper

This Salvador Dali painting depicts the final meal of Jesus that came to serve as a model for Early Christian worship.

Jesus' final modification to the idea of the Temple came during the course of the Last Supper, held in the upper room of a Jerusalem domicile. Besides being the spot where God dwells, according to Judaism, the Hebrew Temple was also only acceptable place for sacrifices to be offered. Though Christians don't always agree on the details, there is an understanding that the sacraments of bread and wine given that night are to be taken as a sacrifice of Jesus. By this Christianity takes the requirements of the Temple and reinterprets them such that they become manifest in the body of a believer. This denies the notion of spatial hierarchy and further implies that God dwells inside people and not at a specific geographic location.

These shifts set a precedent of religious examination being communicated through spatial adaptation. They illustrate the power sacred spaces have to communicate and organize ideals of religion and worship. Lastly, they reveal that Christian philosophy

and architecture are neither autonomous creations nor fluid extensions of an existing belief system, rather they are new structures built within the framework of an older one.

Origins of Christian Worship

Though Jesus and His disciples utilized the Temple courts and various synagogues to preach their message, the first spaces to be used primarily for Christian worship were the homes of the believers.¹⁹ Because it was illegal to practice the faith in public, Christians gathered in small secret cells. During their meetings they spread news of the religion, read aloud documents and letters, partook in the Eucharist, and offered support and fellowship.

The home worship experience centered on a common meal shared in the dining room. The followers called this meeting-meal *Agape*, which could be taken as “a celebration of fellowship”. Early Christian worship services likely started out as meals because in Roman times eating was held as a standard in social relationships. This marked another instance of Christianity creating a new ritual within the framework of an older one. But unlike Roman pagan gatherings that required an invitation, Christian meeting-meals were open to all that wished to attend. Early Christianity drew followers from all economic classes. However, around the *Agape* dinner table a person’s seating place was determined by commitment to the faith rather than social standing. Baptized Christians would typically be seated at the table, while visitors and those less involved with the group would stand near the edges of the room. Eventually Christians remodeled the homes where they met to provide a separate space for baptisms. The owners would tear down dining room walls to make way for an altar and more followers. Around 200 AD more organized rituals began to replace the informal meeting-meals.

Much like the Ancient Hebrews, Early Christians adapted their faith around the sacred spaces available to them. These worship spaces were intended to be simple and spartan just as baptism and communion were stripped down versions of the Roman social

¹⁹ Ac 2:46-47.

activities of bathing and eating. Yet as Christianity slowly spread, the bureaucracy of the organization grew to overshadow Christ's example of humility.

Dura Europas

The house-church at Dura Europas is considered the earliest preserved example of pre-Constantinian Christian architecture. The community of Dura Europas (located in what is now Syria), was once an Ancient Roman garrison. Here in 1931 archaeologists began to take a special interest in what they had first thought was a simple residence. The discovery of Early Christian symbols inscribed near a bathtub opened the door to a wealth of information. What looked like a bathtub was actually a baptismal font. Researchers later estimated that this house was built around 200 AD and then transformed into a Christian worship space 31 years later. Because the community was destroyed by the Sassanian incursions of 256 AD there is little doubt that this structure predated Constantine's *Edict of Milan*.²⁰

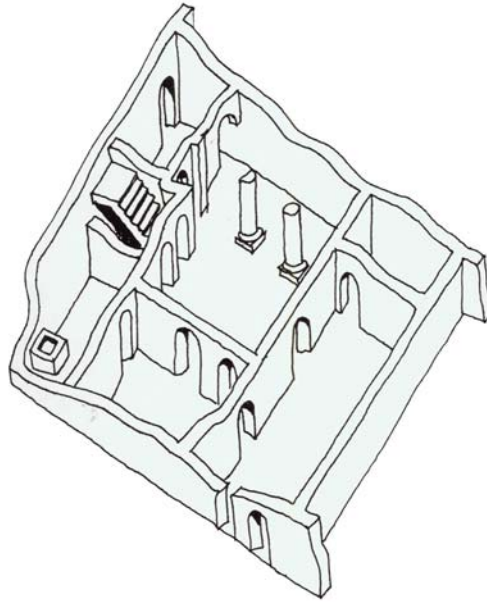
An Early Christian house-church, also referred to as a *domus ecclesia*, was often the home of a wealthier member of a congregation. Initially a house such as this would be used for informal yet religious dinner meetings. After time church members would make modifications to the structure to create larger spaces that better accommodated the ceremonies of baptism and the Eucharist. Eventually the structure ceased to function as a home and was converted for exclusively ecclesiastical purposes.²¹

The house-church at Dura Europas is thought to have fully carried out this transition from house to sanctuary. Its first floor was composed of five interior rooms that surrounded an open court. Tearing down an interior wall created the largest of these rooms at sixteen by fifty-five feet. This space was most likely furnished with a large table

²⁰ Giles, 32-33.

²¹ Sennett, 124-148.

and used for celebrating the *Agape Meal*. Off this room was a smaller room equipped with the baptismal font. Though it took the form of a large basin in this design, some house-churches used an atrium pool for similar purposes.²²



House-Church at Dura Euopas

This archaeological find reveals much about the nature of Early Christian worship in *domus ecclesiae*.

Because Christianity was a widely persecuted faith during this era, house-churches often looked like unprepossessing structures in an effort to downplay their presence. Buildings like that at Dura Euopas exemplified the humble, transient nature of those who worshipped in them.²³

²² Giles, 32-33.

²³ Sennett, 124-148.

Rome's Influence on Christianity

Within three centuries, Christianity had taken a foothold in nearly every corner of the Roman Empire. Yet unlike the people of other races or religions, it was impossible to identify a Christian based on appearance. Because of this Christianity was more difficult to detect. Roughly a third of Rome had converted to Christianity by the time Emperor Constantine issued the *Edict of Milan* in 313 AD. This proclamation established Christianity as an official state religion and ended much of its persecution.²⁴



Lateran Basilica

Christianity's becoming an official state religion of Rome resulted in worship moving from humble house-churches into grandiose basilicas such as this.

Lateran Basilica

Shortly thereafter Constantine began work on what he conceived as a premier sacred space for the new religion. However, the Lateran Basilica served more as an iconic monument to the emperor and Imperial Rome than the faith of a homeless carpenter. The church adapted its form from an ancient court of justice. Its exterior consisted of drab

facades of brick and concrete but its interior was richly decorated with eroticized idols. The linearity and rich ornamentation of the Roman basilica aligned the image of Christ with that of a worldly ruler and shifted Christian worship towards that of pagan religions. “Worship took a form that befitted an imperial building.”²⁵

Christian Worship

As Christianity grew in numbers, the organization of the church expanded in a manner that the gap between clergy and congregation widened. Christianity became more structured and church leaders came to be regarded as holy and imperial. Christian worship held in the Lateran Basilica developed a hierarchy of believers and positioned the bishop as a representation of God. A robed bishop paraded down the central aisle and carried the lights of a Roman magistrate. Lesser Church officials followed him and all the parishioners watched on as the bishop then sat on a throne in front of the apse. He faced a congregation where the men and women sat on opposite sides of the nave. There were two separate worship services held, one for the unbaptized believers, and another for those who were baptized. This second service began with the baptized believers marching down the central aisle to place gifts at the foot of the seated bishop. Then they took part in the Eucharist and perform the communion prayer. Finally, the bishop walked back up the aisle as the congregation stood in silent reverence.

The physical splendor of the Lateran Basilica made it difficult for Christians to transcend their worldly senses and relate to concepts such as humility and placelessness. Because of this, their bond to the earlier faith began to erode.²⁶

²⁴ Sennett, 124-148.

²⁵ Sennett, 142.

A Restructuring of Ideas

Roughly a thousand years later, the legitimacy of the Roman Church was challenged. Around 1100 AD Europe, became less agrarian and more oriented towards manufacturing. This led many people to be more loyal to kings and city officials than local lords and prince-bishops associated with the church. Many of these kings resented the Pope's assigning power over them to the Holy Roman Emperor, not to mention all the money that flowed from their regions to Rome. Kings of smaller German territories and larger Western countries desired independence. Yet more so than the political and cultural factors involved, it was the religious changes rising from the Reformation that resulted in the greatest historical impact.²⁷

Religious Causes

At this time many accused the Roman church of operating under the same corruption as the old Imperial Rome. The most egregious of their complaints addressed the church's selling of indulgences to raise funds to rebuild Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome. This practice allowed wealthy Christians to commit sins for which they had in advance bought forgiveness from the church. Other factors undermining the sanctity of the church included the illiteracy and celibacy violations rampant among many priests. There were corrupt financial practices and church positions had shown they could be bought. The wealth of priests separated them from the laity and the Great Schism illustrated that the organization couldn't agree upon a common Pope. The Renaissance had questioned many institutions, but first among them was the Church. The Renaissance

²⁶ Sennett, 124-148

²⁷ Worldbook Encyclopedia, 1989, s.v. "The Reformation".

encouraged more study of classical languages used in the Bible and began to advocate the rights of laity to read sacred texts for themselves.²⁸

Initial Protestant Denominations

Where previous religious reformations had failed, Martin Luther, a former priest, succeeded in offering a Christian counterpoint movement to Rome. On October 31, 1517 he nailed a list of ninety-five theses, or complaints against the Roman church, to the door at Wittenberg Castle. The essence of his complaints was his assertion that righteousness comes through God not through good works or favor from the church. While it was not his objective at first, after years of fighting with church officials he lead a group of Protestant dissidents who later became known as Lutherans. With Luther's success in breaking away from Rome other Protestant movements emerged until they constituted the majority of Northern Europe.²⁹

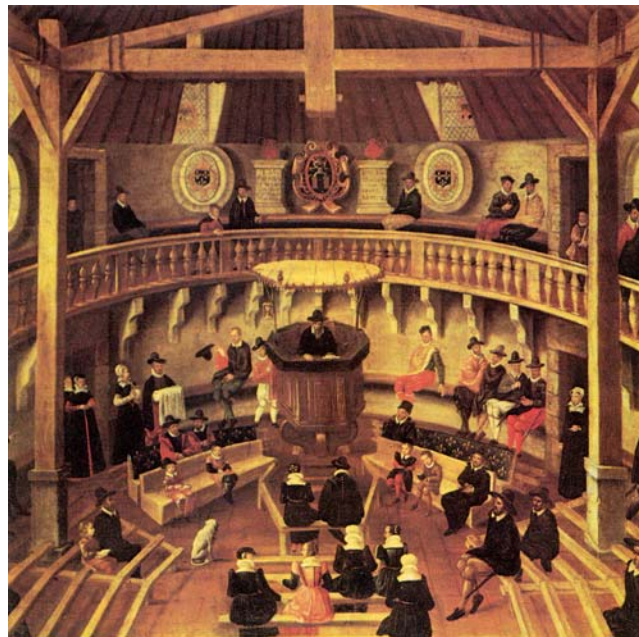
²⁸ Worldbook Encyclopedia, 1989, s.v. "The Reformation".

²⁹ Jensen, 53-88.

An Inconsistency in Change

The Protestant Reformation brought about thorough changes in religion, politics, and culture. However, the same commitment to change was not witnessed in the field of Christian worship architecture.

Many congregations shifting from Catholicism to Protestantism stripped their churches of pictures and statues that they viewed to be graven images. When sculptures were integral to the structure of the church they would be defaced instead. Secondary altars were forbidden and were often broken, burned, or buried. Carved choir stalls, confessionals, stained-glass windows, and other works of art suffered similar fates. When wall paintings were unable to be removed they were whitewashed.³⁰



The Temple at
Charenton

While some Protestant movements built worship spaces upon new design models, many kept practicing in existing Catholic churches.

In spite of the Protestant recourse against sacred art, little was done to change the worship structures that housed them. While new churches were often built around the ideals of centralized plans, existing spaces merely shifted their focus from the altar to the

³⁰ Peter and Lind Murray, 422-424.

pulpit. This issue of altar versus pulpit became the primary difference between liturgical and nonliturgical composition. Some of the earliest examples of this Protestant typology were evident in the French Huguenot Temple in Charenton and Christopher Wren's City churches in London.³¹

Nevertheless, today's Protestant church typology is directly descendent from the basilica structure. In seventeen hundred years there has been little change to the overriding constructs governing function and form. Laity still attend a weekly service, contributing some, but mainly listening to the clergy. Seating arrangements resemble a theater more than an *Agape* meal. Most churches have maintained a single primary volume that follows a linear axis. Hierarchical barriers have faded in places but certainly exist. Although there may appear to be less idolic imagery, a closer look reveals that rich architectural ornamentation has simply replaced it.

³¹ Peter and Lind Murray, 422-424.

Methodism

As had many political rulers of the time, King Henry the VIII of England became resentful of the Pope's authority. His bitterness peaked when the Pope refused to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. Christians in England largely belonged to the Roman Catholic Church until 1534 when the king forced parliament to pass the Act of Supremacy. This replaced the Pope with King Henry as the head of the English Church. The next two successors to the English throne heavily disputed whether England should be a Protestant or Catholic nation. In 1559, Queen Elisabeth I devised a compromise in a second Act of Supremacy which reestablished the independence of the Church of England.³²

Structure of the Church

Within the Church of England, bishops are recognized as successors to the New Testament apostles. The denomination has two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion. It also has its own liturgical reference, *The Book of Common Prayer*. The church is divided into two religious provinces: Canterbury and York. Each province is lead by an archbishop, but the archbishop of Canterbury is known as the Primate of All England and is considered the spiritual leader of the entire Church of England. As with the Roman Catholic Church the religious provinces are further divided into diocese and parishes. However, the laity in the Church of England maintain a greater voice in determining church policy. As it spread to other parts of the world the Church of England became known as the Anglican Church. During the 17th century a group known as the Puritans broke off from the church in pursuit of larger religious reforms.

³² Worldbook Encyclopedia, 1989, s.v. "The Church of England".

Wesley's Altar's Gate Experience

In 1738 John Wesley, an Anglican priest, experienced a personal sense of salvation while at a religious meeting. He felt compelled to minister to those neglected by the Church of England. So along with fellow cleric George Whitefield he began to lead open air revivals to the social underclass. Wesley created loan funds, homes for widows and orphans, free clinics, and helped those in the military and in prison.

Methodism within the Church of England

Later Wesley and Whitefield split ways over doctrinal disagreements. John Wesley was then joined in his ministry by his brother Charles (a famed hymn composer), among other laymen and clergy. Methodism started as a “society” within the Church of England. Lead by Wesley, Methodists first gathered together as *classes* or *bands* to conduct smaller worship services. While they continued to attend weekly mass at their Anglican churches these weeknight meeting eventually evolved into its own Protestant denomination.

The Formation and Spread of the Church

Of those who would form the Methodist Episcopal Church the first immigrated to America shortly before the Revolutionary War. Francis Asbury came to America in 1771 and made Baltimore his headquarters during horseback, canoeing, and hiking missionary trips up and down the eastern seaboard. He became known as “the Prophet of the Long Trail”. He was instrumental in building Baltimore’s Lovely Lane Methodist Church. In 1784 this church hosted the Christmas Conference at which the Methodist Episcopal Church was formed. Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke were then elected as the first two

bishops of the denomination. In 1791 John Wesley died and four years later the Methodists formally broke off from the Church of England.

Because of a strong central authority, hiring laity as preachers, and effective local organizations, the Methodists grew rapidly during the nineteenth century. Methodist circuit riders preached to people on the frontier using simple language. The sect grew particularly fast in more industrial where its messages of thrift and simplicity along with salvation helped the underclass survive economic hardships. Subsequently, the Methodist Episcopal Church grew along side the American Protestant middle-class. Less than a century after the first Methodists came to America their faith had become the largest religious denomination in the nation.³³

Division & Reunification

In 1844 the issue of slavery drove the Methodist Episcopal Church to split into North and South branches. Both branches continued to grow in numbers and eventually reunited in 1939. However, the separate but equal sects of Black Methodists weren't incorporated until 1968 when The United Methodist Church was formed. By 1974 the church had abolished all racial subdivisions.

The Church Today

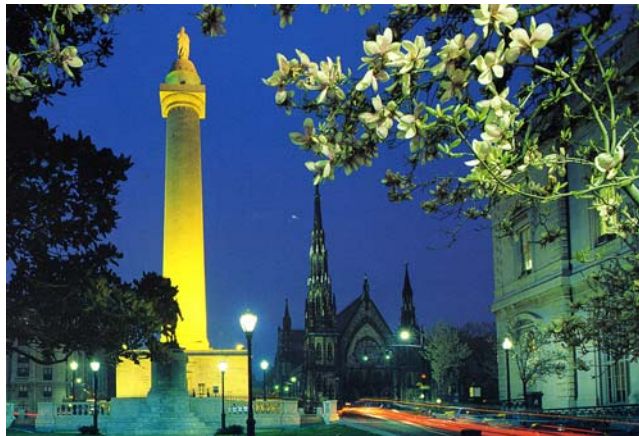
Because Methodism is historically rooted in mission work the modern church has spread throughout the world. In relation to other Protestant denominations modern Methodists leave a lot of religious questions up to the individual member. They believe in simple worship and that a person's individual relationship with God is more important than any other aspect of religion. They believe that salvation is given by the Holy Spirit and that it is their duty to help the underprivileged and improve social condition as a

whole. They typically have smaller groups of worshippers and clergy that are closely connected to a central authority and are moved from church to church relatively often.

³³ Worldbook Encyclopedia, 1989, s.v. “Methodism”.

Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church

Ten years after the death of George Washington a group of prominent Baltimore citizens petitioned for a lottery to raise funds for the first monument in his honor. At first it was to be built downtown. However, those living near the site feared the monument collapsing onto their houses or serving as a dangerous lighting rod. Its location soon moved to an unpopulated hilltop slightly north of the city. General John Eager Howard, a Maryland patriarch and Revolutionary War hero, donated part of his *Belvidere* estate to the monument. An expensive design by Robert Mills was selected and the corner stone was laid in 1815. After running low on funds the monument was completed nearly fourteen years later. It stood one hundred and seventy-eight feet tall and was capped by a sixteen-foot statue of Washington pointing southward towards the city.³⁴



Washington Monument

This monument is not only the first to honor President Washington, but it also serves as a symbolic center for the city of Baltimore.

In 1831 four parks were placed around the monument in the shape of a Greek cross. The squares to the north and south of the monument were called Washington Place and the squares to the east and west of the monument were called Mount Vernon Place. Over their history the parks have been redesigned several times to keep with contemporary standards and have each accumulated a number of outdoor sculptures.

Over the decades an influx of immigrants, rioting, and gang warfare lead many wealthy Baltimore residents to retreat from the crowded city center. Many of these people built mansions around this quiet park on the hill.³⁵

In time a growing urban population and the advent of the automobile lead socialites to move further into the country. Investors built hotels where houses once stood and subdivided grand mansions into smaller tenements. The Mount Vernon Place neighborhood saw a low point in property values during the Great Depression. World War II brought along a dramatic increase in property values which forced out all the businesses on the square leaving only large civic institutions like the Peabody Institute and Walters Art Gallery along sides some high-end residences.



Mount Vernon Place

Many of Baltimore's most prominent institutions are located on the four parks surrounding the Washington Monument.

A newspaper article from November 11, 1943 wrote, "Mount Vernon Place occupies a peculiar position in the feelings of Baltimoreans. It is an asset that belongs to all of them and in which all take a certain pride, no matter in what section of the city they live. It is not exactly the center of the city-certainly not the center of its business or industrial activity-but it is clearly the heart of the city."³⁶

³⁴ *History of the Washington Monument and Mount Vernon and Washington Places*. 2002.

³⁵ *The Evening Sun*. Baltimore, MD. November 11, 1943.

³⁶ *The Evening Sun*. Baltimore, MD. November 11, 1943.

Today Mount Vernon Place is a neighborhood filled with wealthy young literati. Its proximity to poorer neighborhoods and the fact that Charles Street bisects it makes this area one of the most important crossroads in the city.

Origins of the Congregation

In 1773 Bishop Asbury helped build the Strawberry Alley Chapel to become the first Methodist church in Baltimore. A few years later the congregation rebuilt their church closer to the center of town and named it Lovely Lane Chapel. Only a year after hosting the historic Christmas Conference the church was sold and the congregation again moved into a larger building renaming itself the Light Street Methodist Church. Church divisions being common to Protestant churches at the time, the congregation split over a proposal to incorporate instrumental music into the service as well as sell and rent church pews. The Schism of 1843 saw the liberal members of the Light Street Methodist Church dissent and built a new church further uptown. This new church, naming itself the Charles Street Methodist Episcopal Church, was one of the first Methodist churches in the area to install an organ. Throughout the years this congregation has maintained a reputation as progressive thinking and liberal leaning. Twenty-nine years later the church sought to build yet further uptown on Mount Vernon Place.³⁷

Former Edifice

Located on the northeast corner of the Washington Monument, the church was built on the site of a mansion previously owned by Charles Howard, son of John Eager Howard. Francis Scott Key, author of *The Star Spangled Banner*, was the father-in-law to

³⁷ *History and Destiny*. Church Bulletin. November, 1962.

Charles Howard and made this house a patriotic landmark when he died there on January 11, 1843 while visiting his daughter.³⁸

Architectural Design

In 1870 the Charles Street Methodist Episcopal Church bought the property from Louise Gambrill and changed its name to the Mount Vernon Place Methodist Episcopal Church. On September 26, 1870 nearly 1,500 people came to see the corner stone laid. The church, designed by Thomas Dixon and Charles L. Carson, created a sizable controversy by being one of only three Victorian Gothic buildings in the city and the only such example on the square. Conceived of as a “Cathedral of Methodism”, the church was completed on November 12, 1872 and formally dedicated nine days later.³⁹



Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church

This church provides a strong, distinguished edge to the Northeast corner of the Monument Square.

³⁸ *Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church*. Pamphlet.

³⁹ *The Evening Sun*. Baltimore, MD. November 9, 1947

The pastor at the time said, “We do not propose to build an ornate little ecclesiastical bandbox for the benefit of a few rich persons who will control it. We throw the portals of our church open to all people and the people will assist us.”⁴⁰

The site, building, and interior furnishings cost \$400,000. The original design theme of God’s creation and many of the interior carvings and stained glass refer to nature themes. The church’s main steeple shows respect for the importance of the Washington Monument by rising to one foot beneath its height. This subsequently made it the second highest structure in Baltimore at that time. The pipe organ was the 4th largest in America and used waterpower. From it electric sparks could light gas fixtures throughout the interior. The rose window on the south wall was modeled after Notre Dame de Paris and the stained glass behind the pulpit is a Connick cross. In 1926 the Eutaw Street congregation merged with the Mount Vernon Place congregation and brought with it the burial plate of Bishop Asbury who was once buried beneath its church. The plate is currently displayed in the narthex and the sanctuary features the pulpit he once used.⁴¹

The brownstone house next door was bought by the church in 1957 and incorporated into the facility five years later. Built in 1850, it remains one of the few early Victorian townhouses in Baltimore that hasn’t been divided into apartments. After being purchased by the church it was named Asbury House after the first Methodist bishop in America, Francis Asbury. It was renovated to hold church offices and meeting rooms and was connected to the church by a new stairwell and hallway addition. The project that also included a massive renovation of the church’s basement cost around \$200,000.

⁴⁰ *The Evening Sun*. Baltimore, MD. November 9, 1947.

⁴¹ *Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church*. Pamphlet.



Material Detail

The church's most identifiable feature may be the green serpentine marble used on its exterior.

Building Materials

The exterior stone palette is the church's signature characteristic. Mount Vernon Place United Methodist was built using six different kinds of stone including green serpentine marble, buff sandstone (used as trim), red Connecticut sandstone (used as trim), gray stone, olive sandstone. The green serpentine stone is now considered extremely rare in architectural applications. In addition the interior showcases hand-carved American walnut pews and cast-iron columns.⁴²

⁴² *Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church*. Pamphlet.



Steeple Detail

The Steeple, one of the church's most visible features, has shown particular deterioration over the decades. Stonework falling from extreme heights have made it a danger to those walking beneath it.

State of Repair

In 1932 and again in 1978 exterior stone-work needed to be replaced. Stones weighing up to seventy-five pounds have fallen from the steeple over one hundred feet above the sidewalk. A newspaper article from 1928 noted, "Wind and weather have a crumbling effect on the stone, bits of which can be picked up on the pavement, but have enhanced rather than injured the beauty of the structure." Yet the poor conditions have not been limited to the exterior. In particular the loft in the upper sanctuary appears to be suffering from a serious decay of structure.⁴³

Church Mission

Over the years Mount Vernon Place United Methodist has reached out to the city primarily through missionary and artistic programs. In the early twentieth century an entire worship service was devoted nearly every month to the performance of an oratorio or cantata. Some of these services marked the first time a piece of music was performed

anywhere in the city. Around this same time Baltimore's Women's Civic Leaguers would use the church basement once a year to prepare food for the spring Flower Mart held at the base of the Washington Monument. Another important tradition of the church was its New Year's Eve candlelight watches in which nearly one thousand people filled the sanctuary, each holding a candle.

During both World Wars the church provided shelter and food for thousands of sailors and soldiers each year. Without discriminating as to race or religion the church claimed to never have turned away a serviceman in need. Most would stay on weekend leaves from Friday night through Sunday morning. The church set up seventy-five beds in the loft sanctuary and allowed all others to sleep on sofas in the social room, in the pastor's office, and even on the pews themselves. This program was funded largely through the donations of the congregation.⁴⁴

In spite of these services the church has faced financial troubles throughout its history. In fact, in 1919 New York capitalists almost succeeded in tearing down the church to make way for a hotel. For the better half of a century the church congregation has not represented a cohesive group of neighborhood residents but rather a transient mix of travelers and working-class families. A newspaper survey in 1947 showed that those worshipping in two weeks time represented over twenty-eight states. Yet the church board has remained convinced that Mount Vernon Place United Methodist still serves a necessary ministry in this area of downtown Baltimore.⁴⁵

The hard times suffered during the mid-twentieth century only invigorated leaders to revamp the image of their church into something more social and entertaining in nature. With an emphasis on the arts, the church began to attract hundreds of young

⁴³ *The Baltimore News*. Baltimore, MD. January 23, 1928.

⁴⁴ *The Evening Sun*. Baltimore, MD. May 13, 1943.

⁴⁵ *The Evening Sun*. Baltimore, MD. November 9, 1947.

professionals and students. But in time the suburban boom pulled both money and youth from the congregation.

In 1973 a report showed that the congregation that once had two thousand members had dwindled to just over four hundred and fifty. Of this number nearly 60% were elderly persons. Subsequently, the report proposed three measures be taken. These included emphasizing adult Christian education, improving finances, and recruiting new members, especially students. So the church began to offer dinner on Sundays when most local dormitory cafeterias were closed. However, the church's membership numbers continued to drop. By 1976 over 80% of the congregation was older than sixty-five. In 1977 the church began to serve a three-dollar lunch every Sunday in order to meet the needs of a growing elderly population that lived nearby but didn't necessarily attend church there. Multimedia presentations and small group discussions were incorporated into the worship service and were each referred to as a "stimulus" rather than a sermon. Each generation is faced with abandoning the church.⁴⁶

Mount Vernon Place United Methodist currently leases rehearsal space to the Peabody Conservatory. The church operates several Christian education organizations and beginning in 1977 it has broadcast its Sunday morning services over WBAL radio. These outreach programs have brought dozens of new visitors to the church each week. Recently attendance has risen from less than one hundred visitors a week to around two hundred and fifty. Today the church feeds more than four hundred people each Saturday through its Carpenter's Kitchen program as well as run Quality of Life retreats for people suffering with AIDS. Church leaders now attribute the Methodist sense of mission with keeping the church alive for so many years.

Openness through Architecture

Methodism advocates openness, charity, and environmental stewardship yet these qualities are largely absent in the architecture of Mount Vernon Place United Methodist. In relation to Methodist philosophy Mount Vernon Place United Methodist is an inaccessible and uninviting building. Every exterior door sits atop a flight of steps; there is no handicap accessible entrance into the church. These stairs not only provide a physical obstacle, but a psychological one as well. By raising the entrances the structure expresses its formality and discourages more tentative people from coming in. The scale and austere aesthetics may also intimidate those who don't feel "religious" enough to go to church. With an aesthetic like this comes an attitude that one should look but not touch. While most people consider architecture of Mount Vernon Place to be beautiful, it is also the sort of design that scares away homeless people and others who feel beneath society. This is a particular disappointment since the denomination grew largely out a spirit to help people such as these.

The architectural program also provides few reasons for nonmembers to go inside. However, if someone did wish to stop by and visit the church they would most likely find every door to be locked. As it is with most churches today, Mount Vernon Place United Methodist is only open for a few hours each Sunday.

Charity through Architecture

Mount Vernon Place United Methodist also fails to express a sense of charity. Because it may be difficult for people to seek help at a place they don't perceive to be "open" the formal aesthetic discussed before may also keep the church from successfully delivering aid. Therefore, if the church wanted to stand for charity it would have better

⁴⁶ *The Evening Sun*. Baltimore, MD. January 24, 1977.

luck in showcasing their commitment to mission work. Such a move wouldn't rely on an overpowering architectural image to express the great qualities of a religion but would let actions speak for themselves.

Environmental Stewardship through Architecture

Though Mount Vernon Place United Methodist was designed long before environmental technology developed into what it is today, it still sidestepped conservationist opportunities taken by other buildings of the time. Its thick masonry walls provide little thermal insulation and the overall composition fails to take advantage of wind patterns or solar orientation.

Design Interventions

While some of these discrepancies between philosophy and architecture could be mitigated through tactful, light-handed interventions, the intent of this thesis is to create a strong statement that favors rethinking the church rather than just remodeling it. Leaving the religious philosophy of the church as the only constant, this design uses the function, form, and fabrication of new architecture to bridge the gap.

Function

Protestant churches are no longer the community centers they once were. While most congregations include outreach programs on a full-time basis, members rarely engage with their church for little more than an hour a week. This idea of gathering only once a week undermines Methodism's interpretation of worship as a lifestyle rather than a special ceremony.

This thesis design calls for the function of Mount Vernon Place United Methodist to support the philosophy of the religion through openness, charity, and environmental stewardship. In contrast to a single sanctuary, it proposes smaller spaces that each address a specific facet of human life. These activities would foster physical, mental, and spiritual health including such things as medical examinations, *Alcoholics Anonymous* meetings, and small prayer services. Placing these functions in proximity to one another and under the umbrella of a Methodist church creates a sacred approach towards conventionally secular activities. These spaces would never close and be available to any responsible individual or group. Mount Vernon Place United Methodist would come to interpret worship as a lifestyle rather than an event. Based on the program logistics the design segregates these actives into four zones: a free clinic, soup kitchen, homeless shelter, and multipurpose rooms.

Free Clinic - This area provides physical, mental, and spiritual health to those who can't or don't wish to pay for it. The free clinic includes its own lobby and interview nodes designed to quickly direct patients to those services that might best treat them. It contains medical examination rooms and corresponding supports spaces such as EKG and minor surgery labs. In addition to office spaces for nurses and medical doctors there are four psychiatrists' offices and two pastors' offices for religious counseling.

Soup Kitchen - This area provides three free meals a day to anyone who wants one. It can also be used for special events such as wedding reception catering and cooking classes. In addition to a serving space, it includes areas for food storage and preparation, and an office for the kitchen manager.

Homeless Shelter - This area provides living and sleeping quarters for travelers and homeless people. There are family living quarters and general living quarters that can adapt for varying percentages of men and women guests. Access to this area is designed to be closely monitored to maintain security.

Multipurpose Rooms - These areas are designed to be the focal points of the church. While the design includes one large multipurpose room that can handle many of the traditional ceremonies of a worship space, its focus is distributed among a chain of smaller multipurpose rooms. These spaces recall the origins of Methodism by providing informal places for people to meet together in *classes*. The size, shape, location, and orientation of these spaces varies so that activities from yoga classes to daycare can find more appropriate settings.

Security - Because of the open and charitable nature of these functions this design also takes into account the threat of irresponsible people disrespecting the church. Security personnel would limit access to those people in need of and unwilling to accept addictions and mental therapy. However, those unable to enter the church could still find protection from the natural elements in a connected nomadic shelter.

Form

The religious philosophy of the Mount Vernon Place United Methodist congregation is not reflected in the design of its current church. Though it may practice ideals of openness, charity, and environmental stewardship, these qualities are not expressed in the architecture.

This thesis design calls for the form of Mount Vernon Place United Methodist to support the philosophy of the religion through openness, charity, and environmental stewardship. In contrast to the existing structure the new building employs principles of universal and sustainable design.

Universal Design – This design works to treat all people and all activities on equal terms. The decision not to use ramps or stairs outside of required fire escapes allows visitors similar opportunities in accessing spaces. The large multipurpose room is situated at the elevation of the surrounding sidewalks. Broad walls composed of glass doors create a thin barrier so that the exterior is brought inside to make this space operate as a controlled urban plaza. This large multipurpose room is capable of hosting formal ceremonies but also serves as a circulation space that easily brings visitors into the center of the church. Whereas the primary space of the old church was set above street level and rarely open to passersby, this design encourages people to spill inside to loiter or take a shortcut through to the other side of the building.

Sustainable Design – This design reflects the Methodist philosophy of taking care of the earth by employing environmentally sustainable materials and systems. For instance, much of the exterior is clad in recycled aluminum siding.

Passive ventilation is integrated by using vents in a translucent tensile roof as a heat chimney. This works by the sun heating the air inside the building so the hot air rises and escapes through the vents surrounding the posts in the ceiling. This creates a pressure

differential that pulls cooler air through the operable windows located at the lower, occupiable portions of the church. Cooler air circulates throughout the building while limiting thermal pollution and conserving energy.

Passive heating is integrated by using the twelve-inch deep concrete floor for the large multipurpose room to absorb excess solar heat transmitted through the glass roof. Acting as a tromb wall it keeps the interior cooler during the day and warmer at night when its heat is slowly release back into the space.

Passive lighting is integrated simply by opening the interior to sunlight through the glass roof. This significantly cuts down on the artificial lighting needed for many of the hours these spaces are used the most. In smaller multipurpose rooms louvers let more natural light in during winter months when it is needed most.



Living Machine

In addition to cleaning the air, this system of bacteria and vegetation is designed to filter waste water on-site and reuse it as nonpotable water.

Lastly, a *living machine* dramatically cuts down on the church's water consumption by filtering and recycling all nonpotable water onsite. Running the water from toilets, sinks, and rainwater cisterns through a series of tanks, each providing different bacteria and vegetation systems, purifies the water. A friendly byproduct of this process are the plants that not only cleanse the air, but a portion of which can provide food to the soup kitchen. This system also endorses the idea of openness by bringing a

typically exterior element (vegetation), indoors. In addition to the *living machine* a row of trees are planted on the park side of the third level to filter light from directly entering the small *class* rooms on the opposite side of the building. These trees also contribute to cleaner air and project a harmony with the natural environment. They further help the large multipurpose room feel less exclusive and more like an extension of the public spaces in the adjacent parks.

Fabrication

If realized in a completely new and autonomous structure the functional and formal elements proposed by this design would lack a certain reference point needed to express the philosophy of the religion. Just as Christianity was a religion built within the framework of Judaism, so too is Methodism a response to the Roman Church. Therefore, this design maintains strategic portions of the existing Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church and builds new structure around them. The approach taken toward the siting and execution of the design influences the messages communicated through the architecture. The steeples, three pitched exterior walls, and wrought iron sanctuary framing were all saved because they proved to be the most powerful elements in outlining the massing of the old church. By removing floor plates, interior walls, and longitudinal exterior walls the site was opened to more design opportunities.

This juxtaposition of new to old is intended to create a stark contrast between the historical, (Roman) approach toward Christian architecture and an approach more sympathetic to the tenants of Methodism. While the existing structure is a heavy and ornate masonry wall the new structure is clad with light, almost transient screens of perforated and bent aluminum. The majority of the roof is composed of a translucent tensile structure that encloses the secondary and tertiary existing arches while letting the primary ones pass through to express themselves as part of the exterior.

The three steeples, the most superfluous and decorative elements of the old church, are filled with and wrapped by conduits for utilitarian functions like mechanical chases, elevator shafts, and fire escapes. This works to objectify the former ornamentation and again let the actions of the build serve as its new iconography. The new structure is carefully built within and around the old framework such that the two entities connect seldomly. When they do these joints are constructed using glass block which itself combines the material qualities heavy masonry and transparent, ephemeral technology. New column structure is built around the existing ironwork so that the old columns neither carry any weight nor touch the new framework. The steel channels flank the existing columns to frame them similarly to how other former ornamentation is treated in the design.

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