

ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Fall 2006

Vol. 40, No. 2

The Power of the Visual Arts in Communicating the Gospel

ST. JOHN, 3

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21 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.

22 Nicodemus saith unto him, That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit: how can we see that?

23 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit: thou canst not see that which is born of the Spirit: for the Spirit is a gift of God, which is born of the Spirit.

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Bible study.
(c) The effect of the Holy Spirit
like turning a flood of light into
passages of scripture
seen before. The truth shines
unfolded before the mind, as
out of receiving it.
(d) In such instruction, all
we are employing is the
secular sciences which
and of man.

Application: Spec
16 For God so loved
the world, that he gave
his only begotten Son,
that whosoever be-
lieveth in him should
not perish, but have
everlasting life.
17 For God sent not
his Son into the world
to condemn the world;
but that the world
through him might be
saved.
18 He that believeth
on him is not con-
demned: but he that
believeth not is con-
demned already, be-
cause he hath not
believed in the name of
the only begotten Son
of God.
19 And this is the
condemnation that
light is come into the
world, and men loved
darkness rather than
light, because their
deeds were evil.
20 For every one that
doeth evil hateth the
light, neither cometh
to the light, lest his
deeds should be re-
proved.
21 But he that doeth
truth cometh to the
light, that his deeds
may be made manifest.



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IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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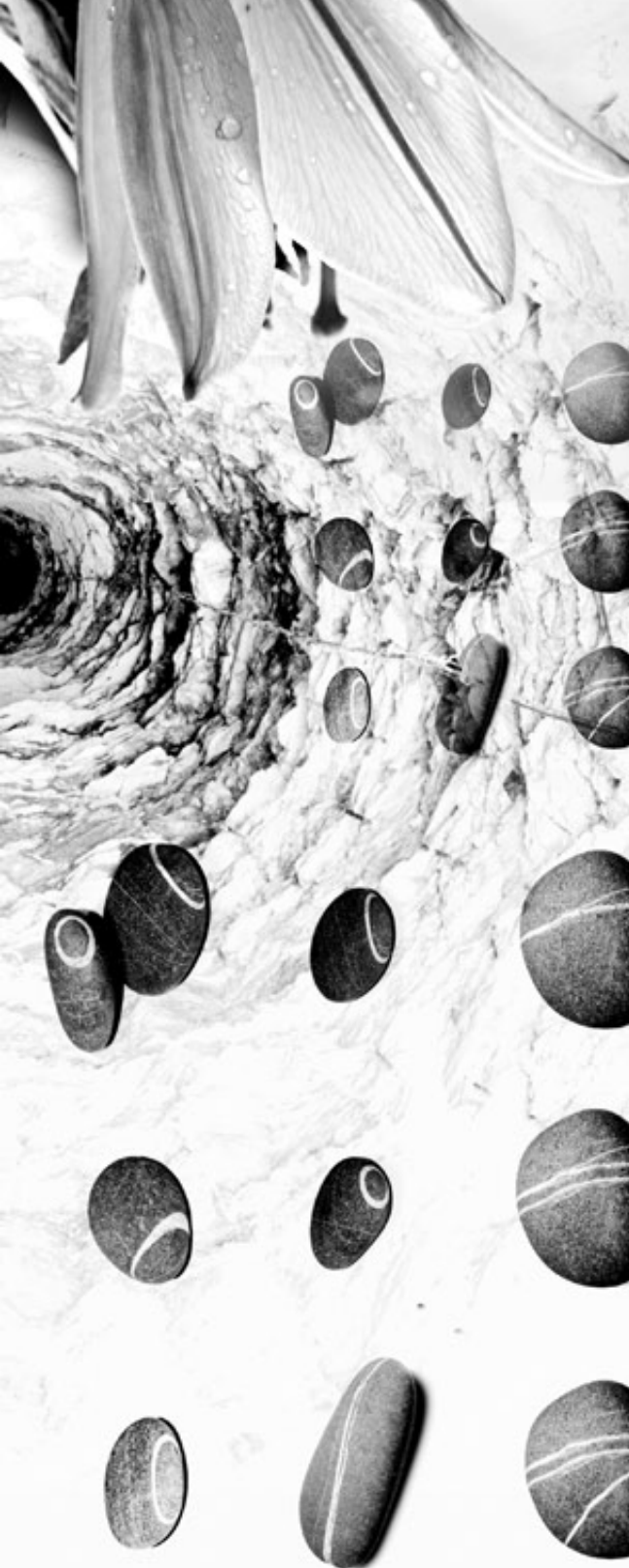
Holly Matzke

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reflections

The power of the visual was not lost on Jesus. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus explains: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand." Nor was it lost on Martin Luther. In his Explanation of the First Article of the Apostles Creed, Luther wrote: "I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still preserves them."

Sight is a powerful sense given us by God and used by Him to help us know and understand the world around us. We live in a visual society. The old clichè that "a picture is worth a thousand words" is exploited to the nth degree in popular culture. All kinds of sights, pictures and images vie for our attention. Digital cameras, camera enhanced cell phones and PowerPoint presentations are but a few of the numerous tools that flood our eyes and fill our brain waves with a nearly incomprehensible feast of the visual. However, precious few visuals, unless seen through the eyes of faith, have the goal of helping to extend and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This edition of *Issues* invites us to see with our eyes and through that seeing perceive in new ways the power of the visual arts in assisting God's people with the communication of the precious Good News that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us!" Rev. Wetzstein challenges us to synchronize our understanding of resources expended by the church for the visual arts with the core of the church's mission. Dr. Kenneth Schmidt reminds us that we "use the language of words and the language of images and symbols to teach the eternal truths of salvation." And Professors Berkbigler and Creed provide a helpful context for using technology in worship as they suggest that "there is a need for resonance between images and words."

Recently, a Concordia University, Nebraska art student shared with me her reason for studying the visual arts at Concordia. She said: "There's so much more that churches can do visually to minister." How true! I thank God for the gifted, talented faculty, staff and students of Concordia University, Nebraska and for all who work in congregations and communities to help open the eyes of people to see the Savior through their talents and the gift of art.

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By-lines and author information set in 13/13 point Mrs. Eaves small caps.
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Feature articles set in 11/13 point Mrs. Eaves.
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Brian L. Friedrich, President

That You Might See with the Eyes of Your Heart

On an early spring evening members of the small rural congregation were continuing their sanctuary refurbishing projects in anticipation of their church's 125th anniversary. Aging pieces of dated yellowed paneling were being painstakingly removed from the walls on either side of the chancel when suddenly to the surprise and delight of the members, two large paintings slowly began to appear. As the last pieces of wood lay on the floor beneath the walls, the members stood almost breathless beneath the paintings: one of Jesus blessing the children and a second of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. The paintings, though perhaps less than masterpieces, were handsome, compelling and headlined in German ... "Der Herr ist mein Hirte."

No one present knew when or how the lost paintings were literally "boarded up," but all agreed they were precious discoveries. A local artist renewed the paintings, English banner lines were added, and this prairie revelation became a centerpiece celebrating 125 years of the Savior's blessing.

The story of the lost paintings begs the question, why were they covered up? Were members uncomfortable with the German? Was the congregation unable to pay for necessary refurbishing? Did current trends and tastes trump tradition? None of the members seemed to know, and few if any would hazard a guess. But for whatever reasons, the symbols, the visuals wore out, fell silent and were lost ... almost.

Church visual arts, whether the symbol on a parament, the stained glass in the sanctuary or a painting in the narthex, can quickly and quietly fall into the category of mere decoration, little more than ecclesiastical eye candy. The symbol, once powerful, the colors once arresting, the art once soul-filling, slowly merge into the woodwork or are even concealed by it ... and those who have eyes to see don't, and hungry souls move on unfed.

One contemporary writer suggests that, "Hell is where nothing connects." This confession from the dark side may carry within it some clues as to why visual arts in the church are at times dismissed as too ephemeral or expensive and at other times simply lost. The dynamic that almost alone connects families, communities, schools, nations, churches, is the community narrative, the shared story. But when the story is forgotten, the narrative lost, the history unknown, the shared purpose dissolves and the community disintegrates.

When the story fails to connect the life of the community to its art, the symbol,

the color, the light, the figure, the place, no matter its intrinsic value, is without life, without power, without beauty. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but only if the picture connects to and illuminates the shared narrative which gives unity and purpose. The very essence of the Incarnation is the story of the inexpressible love and beauty Who becomes flesh so that we might truly "See!" "With eyes wide open to the mercies of God," St. Paul writes to the Romans and again to the church at Ephesus, "that you might see with the eyes of your heart." The essence of the Gospel is that the immortal beauty and the eternal story have become one.

The connections are perhaps obvious, but a few reminders or suggestions might be in order. The story implicit in the parament symbol or pulpit design must be imaginatively told again and again not only for the eager young, but also for the almost blind. (This latter will certainly serve the children better than simply leaving them to count ceiling tiles during worship.) The stained glass window and baptismal font must find their connections to the history of the people and the story of Jesus. The altar design and the cross configurations must be offered to God's people regularly so the story can be rehearsed and the connections made. The textures, the materials, the shapes, the placements, the postures, the environments must be celebrated faithfully in the congregation's gatherings so that history can be remembered, meaning restored and purpose renewed.

The visual arts when connected with the story become for the baptized truly "means of grace." The discovery of the small congregation's art was more than an *Antiques Road Show* connection to a favorite uncle or a long gone great grandfather. The community has been embraced in new ways by the Spirit's story of His people, past, present and future.

Perhaps the 8th century poet sings it best in the hymn to the Holy Spirit, *Veni Creator Spiritus*:

Come Holy Ghost our souls inspire,
Ignite them with celestial fire;
Spirit of God, you have the art
Your gifts, the sev'nfold to impart.

Your blest outpouring from above
Is comfort, life, and fire of love.
Illumine with perpetual light
The dullness of our blinded sight.

The Rev. Howard Patten, Pastor
Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church
Angel Fire, New Mexico



The Eye of the Beholder

Recently, our congregation dedicated a new sanctuary. The cross, altar, pulpit, baptismal font and processional cross were all designed by the Center for Liturgical Art of Concordia University, Nebraska. Two phrases come to mind as I reflect upon our sanctuary and chancel: "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" and "a cross that says it all." The imagery and symbolism of our new worship space engage all the senses and reinforce the truth that art and architecture are forever wedded. The vibrant colors, signs and symbols draw us inexorably into a spirit of worship. They tie our everyday world together at the core with the God who created the world, sent His Son as Savior, and empowers us today through the Holy Spirit.

Often people divide the world into the sacred and profane, that which relates to God and that which relates to the world. In his book titled *The Sacred and the Profane*, Mircea Eliade disagrees. "The religious person always believes there is an absolute reality, the sacred, which transcends this world but which manifests itself in the world thereby sanctifying it and making it real." Scripture speaks to this reality in the words of Jesus: "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5).

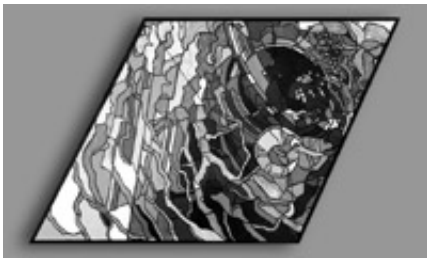
The focal point of the sanctuary is a unique 18-foot-high cross which depicts the entire salvation story. It is actually a cross within a cross—an open-ended Latin cross with a Greek cross at the center, arms extended to the four corners of the earth. Surrounding the center of the cross is gnarled wood, symbolic of sin and all of its darkness. Shining through from the back is a stained glass star reminding us of God the Creator, of God the Promiser to Abraham, of God the Guider of the wisemen, and of Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star.

From the cross, one's eyes move to the altar, seemingly suspended in mid-air, where the theme of outstretched arms is repeated, arms reaching out in prayer and in witness to the world about a crucified Christ, an empty cross, an open tomb, a risen and ruling Lord.

As the sunlight and shadows float across the sanctuary, the reflections from the stainless steel make the cross and its message vibrant and alive. The seasonal parament perched between the legs of the Latin cross sway gently in the breeze, as if moved by the Spirit.

Indeed, a picture is worth a thousand words.

The Rev. David Block, Pastor
Divine Shepherd Lutheran Church
Omaha, Nebraska



What Does Jesus' Body Look Like?

*I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth ...
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord ...
And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church ...*

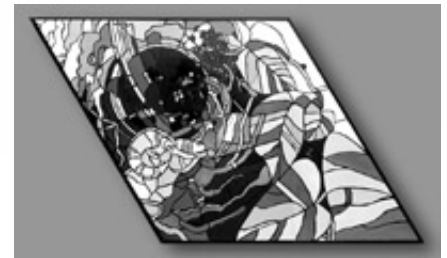
As Christians, we recite creeds every time we gather to worship. They affirm for us that the faith we have as individuals extends outside of ourselves to a vast number of people throughout the world today and even back thousands of years in history. They show us that God is not just some higher power, but we actually know Him and He knows us together as one body, in one common faith, one baptism, and with one Lord Jesus as our head.

How then can visual art in the church work to affirm our common faith in God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

In July 2003 my home congregation, Faith Lutheran in Topeka, Kansas, hosted what we called an "art servant event." Rather than traveling to Mexico or some other distant location, we remained in our own community in Topeka. During this week-long event, we gathered 40 volunteers to paint three murals which focused on the Trinity. On Monday morning, these paintings were blank slates; by Saturday morning, they were installed and unveiled for the public. Sound impressive or impossible?

In fact, though, the week was the culmination of a year of planning. In August 2002, my director of Christian education asked me if I would be willing to lead this event by designing the three murals over the course of the next year and then instructing the 40 untrained volunteers to paint them. This was my particular job while many others would be responsible for meals throughout the week, housing, Bible study, music and individual art projects and crafts. The week of service was made possible by the year of planning and prayer, not just by one leader, but by a community of people who shared a common goal and a common faith in the Triune God.

During the event week, we painted in three pre-assigned work groups, each with its own leader. Each of the leaders was a student, a friend of mine from the Concordia University, Nebraska Art Department. They were responsible for maintaining the quality of the work and the cohesiveness of the group. As their teams mixed a whole spectrum of colors from red, yellow, blue, black and white latex house paint, it was vitally important that the group members communicated with one another so that the colors on a particular mural meshed into one image.



As we worked together on this project, the murals became not just my own statement of faith, but the volunteers who painted them truly did take ownership of the statement. In our painting during the week, we became as a choir that strove to blend our voices into one song with many harmonies. This came about not only by our painting with one another, but also as we discussed the significance and meaning of the murals as we individually saw them. This came about also as we shared meals, played games and had fellowship. As we spent this week together, we grew as one body, a body of believers in Jesus.

I believe that this servant event of 2003 only scratched the surface of possibilities in regard to visualizing our common faith. This is a concept that can be utilized more often and in a wide variety of contexts. It could be done over the period of a year's Sunday morning Bible studies, or it could be done in an intense week-long or weekend project. I share this particular experience in the hope that it will catch on among many other communities of believers around the United States and even around the world. I have seen the benefits that we experienced as a result of this event, and I hope that other communities can experience that same joy.

So what does Jesus' body look like? Jesus' body is seen in the product of art and also in the way that art is created. Just as artists strive to depict what Jesus' earthly body looked like, that body can be seen when believers in Jesus unite around a common goal and a common creed. Of course, this unity cannot be accomplished apart from the work of the Holy Spirit to bind us together in love and obedience to God the Father and to create faith in Jesus' death and resurrection for us. But through the work of the Holy Spirit, we truly become members of Jesus' body and make his body visible to the world.

If you are interested in more information pertaining to the 2003 project or how to organize an art servant event for your own church, please contact me at Karl.Fay@cune.org or Mark Anschutz at the Center for Liturgical Art, Concordia University, Nebraska.

Karl Fay

Student, Concordia Seminary
St. Louis, Missouri



A Return to Old Models?

At first glance, Great St. Martin's in Cologne, built nearly a thousand years ago, has little in common with the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin, built in 1961. The former is one of Cologne's twelve magnificent Romanesque churches, the latter a minimalist structure of concrete, with small windows of blue glass that from the outside are unimposing and, to some, even unattractive. Yet both are notable in how their architecture causes those inside to shift their attention from themselves to a point beyond themselves. The massive stone walls and echoing footsteps of Great St. Martin's suggest the eternity of God, and the inescapable sense of awe that pervades the place forces those present to confront a larger reality. Inside the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, the blue-green light streaming through the portholes—yes, the resemblance is unmistakable—bathes churchgoers in undersea beauty, exuding a deep peace of a kind sadly denied the German nation throughout too much of the 20th century.

Once it was taken for granted that a church's architecture would point those present to God. But several decades ago a new trend emerged, with churches built that directed the attention of those inside to each other. This was done for a reason; namely, a theology that emphasized the community as the body of Christ, with God as immanent, or present among us, rather than transcendent and perhaps unapproachable. This architectural theology became widely known among Lutherans through E. A. Sovik's *Architecture for Worship* (Augsburg Publishing House, 1973). Sovik, a professor of architecture at St. Olaf College (now retired), believed that the Reformation was a failure from an architectural standpoint because it retained the architecture of the medieval church rather than returning to the New Testament house church as a model. Churches, wrote Sovik, should be houses for the people of God rather than houses of God; not liturgical centers, but meeting places. They should be able to be used for various purposes, not just for services.

Churches of his design feature a flexible configuration without a single focal point and without a division of nave and chancel. The eucharistic table (not "altar," a term to which he objects) is set among the people, and it may be portable. Chairs are used instead of pews. Images such as paintings and sculptures are deemphasized, and even the cross is preferably found only atop the processional standard. Flowers and plants are recommended in order to "make the whole room a place of celebration." Sovik calls such a structure a

"centrum" or "non-church." The prototypes he suggests for the centrum are the Japanese tea room, because it emphasizes human interaction, and the living and dining rooms in modern homes.

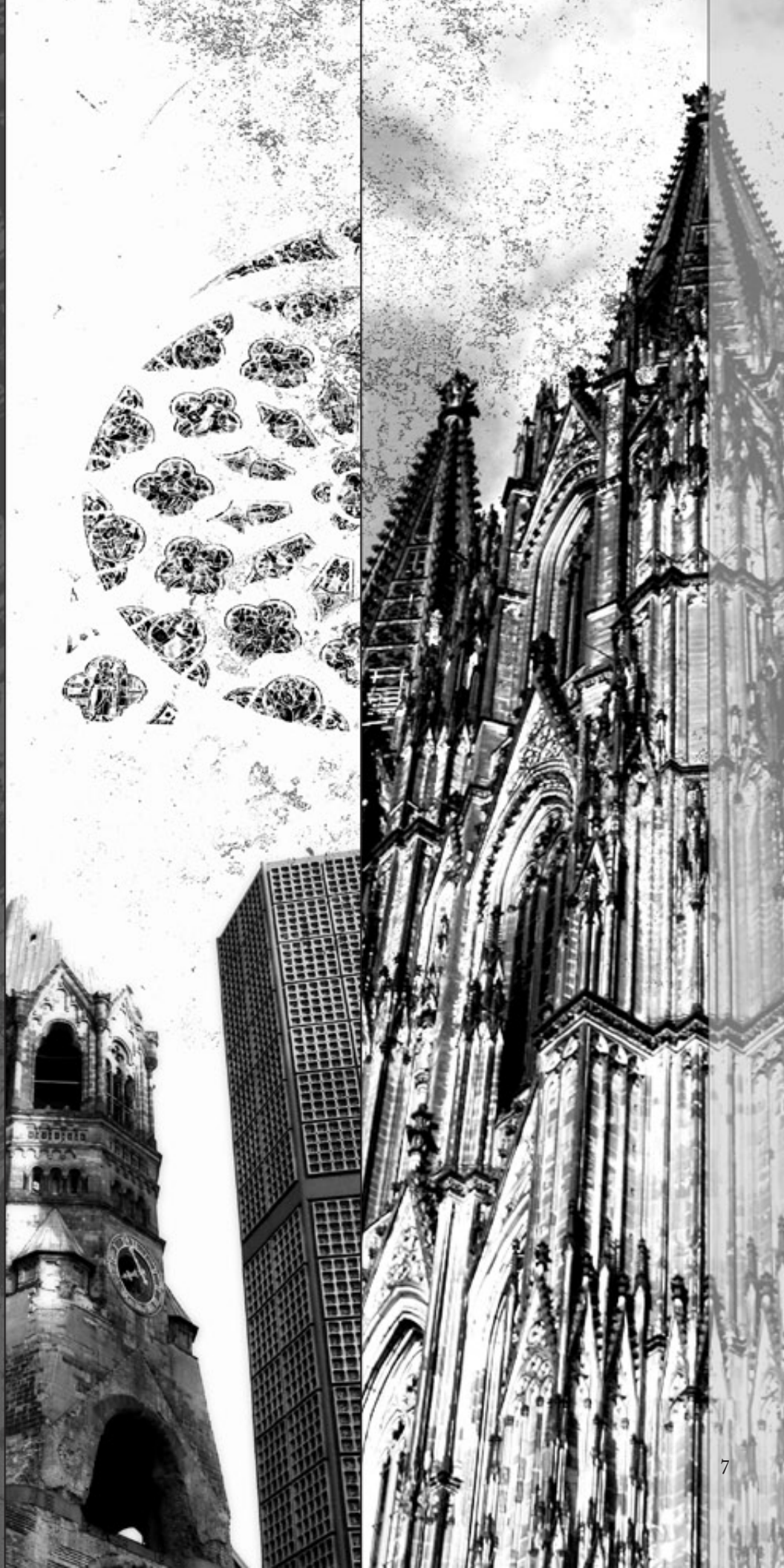
Sovik's philosophy of church architecture has come under fire in recent years among some Roman Catholics. Leading the charge are two professors of architecture at the University of Notre Dame, Thomas Gordon Smith and Duncan Stroik. They believe that the "church as living room" model takes away a sense of the sacred and promotes worship as entertainment. Their own church designs reflect a return to classical models of architecture.

Among Lutherans who think about church architecture, Sovik's theology still seems to be dominant, although fewer people today are familiar with Sovik's name. It will be interesting to see whether the ideas of new classicists such as Smith and Stroik will find their way into Lutheran circles and, if they do, how Lutherans will respond.

Dr. Joseph Herl

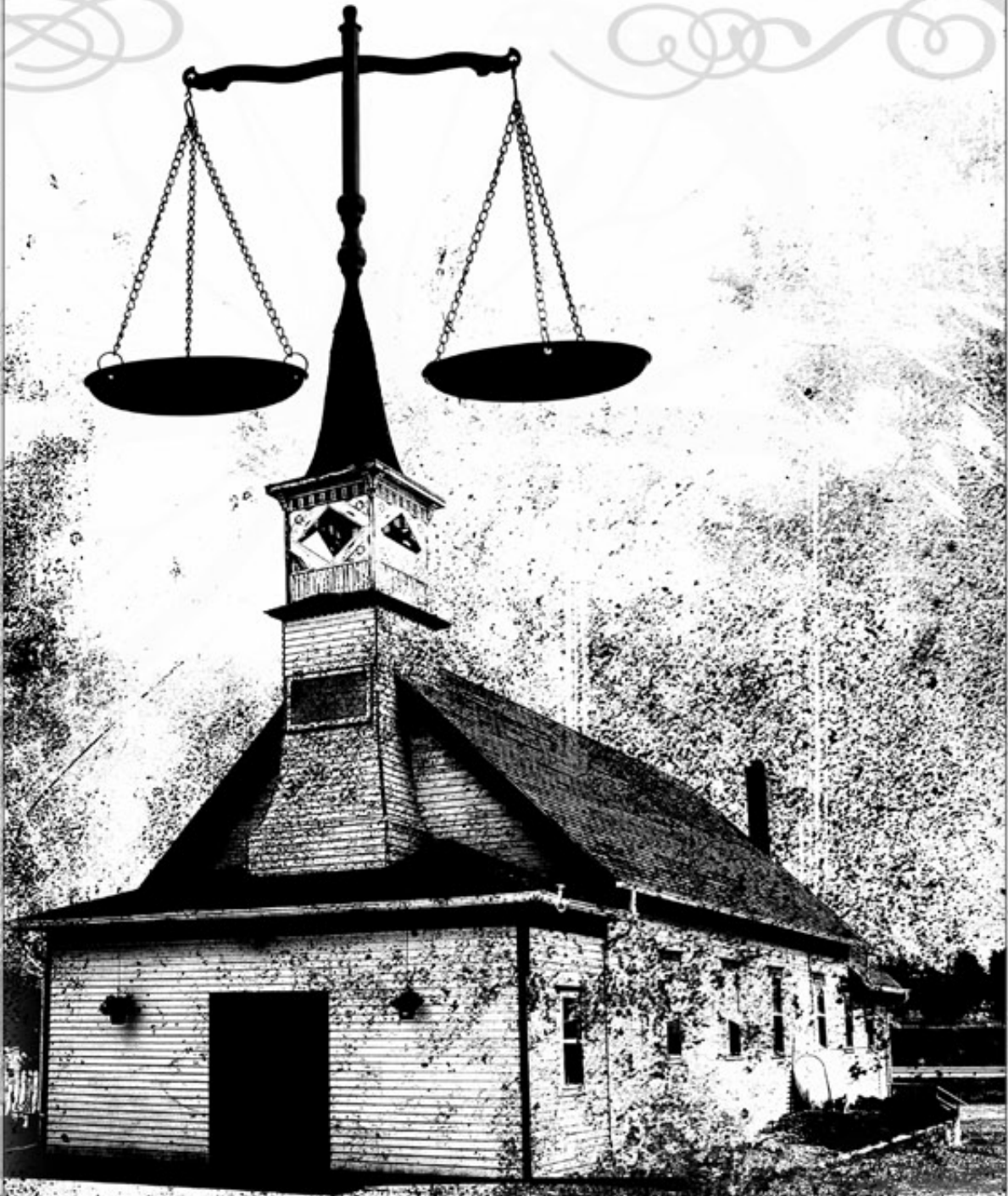
Assistant Professor of Music
Concordia University, Nebraska





JAMES WETZSTEIN

Couldn't This Have Been Sold and the Money Given to the Poor?



Is Beauty a Sin?

It seems that a thing of beauty always draws fire when it's in a church. As soon as the work is completed (sometimes it's as soon as the work is proposed), someone is drawing on the memory of that gracious, but unnamed woman from Matthew 26 and asking the question, "Why this waste? For this stuff might have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor."

The fact that this isn't what Jesus had in mind when he declared, "... what this woman has done shall also be spoken of in memory of her," seems beside the point. The fact that the question comes from the soon-to-be-corrected lips of the often-out-of-step disciples is usually lost on the one asking the question.

But it's not a question at all. It seems to be an obvious fact: In a world where people are starving for want of food and souls are dying for want of the Gospel, original art (i.e.: expensive art) in the church seems like worse than an unnecessary extravagance. It seems downright sinful.

Is this so? Is it always improper for the church to spend its resources on art and design? Is it contrary to the Great Commission of Matthew 28 to seek out and provide things of beauty for the church?

In fairness, we need to return to the text from Matthew 26 and observe that the circumstances there described are somewhat specific and rather unusual. While remaining aware of the Eucharistic theology of some Christians, it's fair to say that it's not every day that Jesus is about to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. The account of the woman's costly gift for the sake of Jesus' preparation for burial in Matthew 26 and its parallels represent a unique event in human history and can hardly be seen as a prescription for Christian stewardship. Nor are Jesus' responses to her action useful in any prescriptive sense, though it's doubtless all sorts of obscene extravagances have been justified on the grounds that "the poor will be with us always."

THE REV. JAMES WETZSTEIN IS UNIVERSITY
ASSOCIATE PASTOR AT
VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY.
JAMES.WETZSTEIN@VALPO.EDU

Is the Bible then silent on the question of spending money on the beauty of church buildings and their furnishings? Hardly.

The Action of Yahweh and the Places of Moses and Solomon

Solomon, having received the divine project approval that his father longed for, seems to spare no expense on the construction of the Temple (1 Kings 5), though the biblical record is silent on the origin of the plans. Moses, on the other hand, receives clear instructions as to both the dimensions of the Tabernacle and its material (Exodus 25-28). Again, however, these examples seem to be more descriptive than prescriptive for contemporary Christians. Moses is given clear (and divine) instruction, to be sure. Judging from the materials list and the nature of the fabrication, it's safe to assume that the construction of the Tabernacle consumed a substantial share of the resources of the Israelites. But the circumstances of their pilgrimage and the intended purpose of both the Tabernacle and its permanent replacement, the Temple, have little in common with Christian worship. Then the Levitical laws, which flow out of something of a manual for the use of the Tabernacle, spell out in great detail the moral responsibilities of the community toward those without resources.

There may be something in this arrangement.

Even a quick skimming of the chapters between Exodus 25 and Leviticus 25 will show that the plans for the Tabernacle, altar and priestly vestments are followed by descriptions of their fabrication and first use in the administration of a very specifically described sacrificial system. This system of sacrifices becomes the people's participation in a relationship with Yahweh. These sacrifices are certainly an expression of thanksgiving, but they are also a means of making amends for failures to live up to their identity as a people with whom Yahweh holds a covenant. The sacrifices are followed by a clear and careful catalog of appropriate human action, much

of it social. The presence of Yahweh in the Tabernacle gives cause for human worship, but it also gives cause for acts of social justice, charity and mercy. The presence of Yahweh in the Tabernacle (as the sign of Yahweh's saving action in the Exodus) is the foundation of lives of justice, charity and mercy.

The Importance of Eating Together

Luther recognizes that this pattern extends into the life of the Christian church when he argues that the Eucharistic table, not family relationships or guild covenants, is the foundation of Christian acts of charity and mercy. In *The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods*, Luther lays out his understanding of the sign, significance and human impact of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. He concludes with a critique of the fraternal organizations that were the established means of providing charity in his day. These brotherhoods, as they are popularly practiced in Luther's day, were not expressions of Christian charity. Rather they were glaring examples of selfishness and pride. "For in them men learn to seek their own good, love themselves, to be faithful only to one another, to despise others, to think themselves better than others, and to presume to stand higher before God than others." (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 35, p. 69).

What is important for our consideration here is not so much Luther's problem with the fraternities of his day, but with his conclusion that the sacred unity created at the Eucharistic table is the foundation and source of all acts of Christian service—especially those done for the sake of other members of the body of Christ.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper creates a fellowship, which, Luther explains, "... consists in this, that all the spiritual possessions of Christ and his saints (i.e. believers) are shared with and become the common property of him who receives this sacrament." (Luther p. 51). Of the implications of this fellowship, Luther writes, "As love and support are given you, you in turn must render love and support to Christ in his needy ones. You must feel with sorrow all the dishonor done to Christ in his holy Word, all the misery of Christendom,

all the unjust suffering of the innocent, with which the world is everywhere filled to overflowing. You must fight, work, pray, and—if you cannot do more—have heartfelt sympathy." (Luther, p. 54).

Where Shall We Eat?

This insight moves us one step down the road toward resolving what may seem to some to be an 'either/or' between art and mission. Such a resolution is found in the realization that at the core of the alleged conflict is an unbiblical anti-materialist presumption. The assertion that people are more important than things, or that mission is more important than things (certainly two unassailable positions) slides quickly and almost imperceptibly toward an assumption that things, that is material goods, are flawed or evil and that for the church to spend its resources on acquiring things, especially things of beauty, betrays a materialistic idolatry. The false assumption continues that if we were serious about mission we'd realize that the place and space are unimportant and that conceiving the space through design and adorning it with art is a dangerous, maybe even sinful misuse of the church's resources.

Holy, Holy, Holy

But the place is important. The service mission (as well as the evangelistic mission) demands a Eucharistic table around which the community will be fed and thus equipped for service. This service will be done by physical people in a physical world among other folk who inhabit both time and space. The Eucharist must happen somewhere. Far from unimportant, the Eucharistic table and the place that houses it are of critical importance to the mission of the church. Since this is so, it is worth asking the question: "What is needed of such a place in order for the mission to be well founded?"

Such a question may seem, on the face of it, ridiculous. Further thought will bear out its importance. Through such thought we will arrive at an appreciation for at least three senses of the word "sacred." Further, we will see that the best source for the mission of the church is found where these three senses

of the sacred are attended to in harmony, so that the reality of the sacred in that place is well attested.

God Says So

Of first and critical importance for the Eucharistic table is the presence of the Eucharist itself. Luther's *Small Catechism* reminds us that the Sacrament of the Altar consists of bread and wine together with the Word of God. The Catechism concedes that Sacrament does not draw its power from the bread and the wine, nor from the eating and drinking, but from the Word of God that is spoken over the bread and the wine such that the promises which God speaks are attached to the bread and the wine and the eating and drinking of it. This brings us to the first sense of the word "sacred." In this sense, things are "sacred," that is, "set apart," special or holy by virtue of God's declaration. The bread and wine of the Eucharist are declared, by the Word of God, to be promise carrying and grace providing. Of all foods consumed by humans, the bread and wine of the Supper are sacred by virtue of the declaration that they are so, by God. To this point, the place, even the quality of the bread and wine are unimportant and irrelevant; what is of critical import is the presence of the Word of God, for it is this word that makes the meal what it is and renders it sacred.

Thus, there is a sense of a "declared sacred," and an example of it lies at the center of the Eucharistic table around which the congregation — the Eucharistic community — gathers.

We're Here Doing This

As this community gathers around this sacred meal, another sense of the sacred comes to be at play. The very act of gathering for the meal (not to mention the service at which it occurs) with a community of people at a particular place for Sunday after Sunday transforms the place of the gathering by virtue of the experience of the community. Individuals see themselves as members of the gathering, experience the reality of the gracious presence of God in the gathering, find friendships among those gathered and mark the most



profound moments of life—birth and death—among the gathered. Individuals are formed in their faith and are formed into a community through such gathering. The place of such formation comes to be a sacred place, not only because things that God has declared to be sacred are present there, but also because it is a place set apart by the practice of that which is good by the assembly.

Such a sense of the sacred is not limited to churches. Schools, where the blessings of learning and friendship initiate individuals into the legacy of alumni, are described as “these hallowed halls.” Infield grass where records have been set and championships won are transplanted from old baseball parks to the new (perhaps soul-less?) stadiums that replace them. Such sacredness, such set apartness, comes from commendable human activity. Such human activity does not work salvation, let’s be clear. But such human activity does render a place set apart and renders that place as sacred.

So the Eucharistic table and the place of its housing come to be sacred, and this “practiced sacredness” joins the aforementioned “declared sacredness” to bear witness to the presence of the Sacred.

It’s Beautiful

These things could happen in a barn. They could happen in a pre-engineered metal structure that was originally designed to warehouse plumbing supplies. Regardless of the environment, the declaration of God and the practice of God’s people would render such a former warehouse a sacred space. For the fully formed Christian and for those members of the household of faith who were formed in that place, the sacredness of such a place would be apparent and unquestioned. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which such an environment would be deemed inappropriate.

The Swiss architect, Le Corbusier, is quoted as saying, “I have not experienced the miracle of faith, but I have known the miracle of ineffable space.” (Kieckhefer, p. 229). One might not want Le Corbusier teaching Bible class, but one can’t fault this pioneer of modernism and the vision behind the 1955 Chapel of Notre Dame du Haut at Ronchamp



in France for his sense of the power of a well-ordered space that uses material and light well.

Human beings respond to their environment; and places of beauty, whether natural or constructed, have the power to trigger deep responses. Certainly one may treasure a painting of a landscape for the technical virtuosity of the painter, but the landscape itself is also the object of our delight. Roads now designated as scenic routes might have been constructed in their day as the most practical route through an area, but such roads are maintained and specially marked in this day of four, six and eight lane freeways because they afford the experience of beauty. Regarding the built environment, Le Corbusier stated, “Space and light and order. Those are the things that men need just as much as they need bread or a place to sleep.” (Wikipedia). The scenic route might no longer seem pragmatic but only if pragmatism is defined strictly by the stopwatch.

This does not mean that church buildings need to be lavish or imposing. In his little book, *Architecture for Worship*, Lutheran architect E. A. Sovik argues for simple buildings that express the reality that the church is the people and not the building, and that this church is called to a life of servanthood. Of traditional church architecture, Sovik observes, “... there is so much similarity between the structures of the church and those of temporal majesty that we Christians have made generally and for centuries the assumption that church buildings should be grand if resources allow and grandiose if they are not. And while churchmen have asserted that good people should be humble and kind, they have



built churches which are presumptuous and unkind." (Sovik, p. 58).

Nevertheless, Sovik makes a compelling case for careful design and the thoughtful use of natural materials in order to create places that, while not ostentatious, are beautiful and hospitable.

In a section under the heading, *The Place of Beauty*, Sovik borrows from the influential work of an early 20th century theologian and philosopher, Rudolf Otto, when he argues that aesthetic beauty is a tool of the artist by which the experience of "the Holy" might be made evident to human beings. (Sovik, p. 60). Otto, in his book, *The Idea of the Holy*, observes that along with a rational/doctrinal component and a moral/ethical component, the experience of God by human beings—the act of worship—brings with it a feeling of God's holiness, a feeling of the numinous. It is worth observing at this point that Otto's categories find their expression in the three senses of the sacred. Sovik contends that the experience of beauty, of places and objects that are well designed and crafted, that use materials honestly and without ruse or pretension, that employ long-tested principles of proportion and balance (which is not to be confused with symmetry), that such examples of beauty are able to mediate (not present or create) the experience of the numinous. Music is another discipline that serves in this capacity.

Well-designed buildings, not just churches, have the ability, by their use of space and light, to trigger the experience of the sacred. They are places, which by the way they present the physical reality of space, are places set apart. No one needs to tell us that such places of beauty are special. Just as surely as we recognize the point of the scenic turnout on the side of the road, we know a special building when we experience it. A building that humanely houses the life of the church which is the reception of the gifts of God for the life of the world, that provides an environment that honestly and directly uses natural materials that feel good to the touch and invite such touch, and that by very design calls one to consider realities beyond one's self, such a place is an example of what one might call the aesthetic sacred.

The Pursuit of Beauty

The pursuit of such beauty will always consume the resources of the church, but such a pursuit need not take on a consumptive role out of balance with the rest of the church's mission. Neither is such a pursuit merely decorative, a pleasantry but unnecessary to the core of the mission. As much as good grammar in the proclamation is necessary, as much as actions of justice and mercy are necessary, so is the quest of beauty in the place of the assembly. None of these things will save us, but all of them bear witness to that which saves.

This then is the point: that in order for the church to receive that which has been given by God and bear witness to the fullness of what it believes about the Gospel and the presence of God, these three senses of the sacred—the declared, the practiced and the aesthetic—must be present.

The Gift of Vocation

There are those within the church whose vocation it is to master the expression of the aesthetic sacred. Liturgical design consultants, artists and architects are living their lives in pursuit of that which is beautiful. Each of them work in their discipline to help the congregation find the means by which all the senses of the sacred may be present in the house of the church.

Consultants work with planning committees and in the context of large congregational meetings, helping a congregation reflect on and take hold of their theology of worship so that when it comes time to communicate with artists and architects, the congregation will have clarity and consensus around their values and programming needs. A time of building or renovation in a congregation ought to be a time of renewal. A liturgical design consultant can help to make the most of this opportunity.

While it's said that beauty is in the eyes of the beholder, it's also true that particular shapes, proportions and plans are consistently pleasing. The world of our creator God is full of models and patterns worthy of analysis and adoption. Artists and architects make it their business to see and reflect on these basic structures and principles. As surely as

it's a blessing for a congregation to receive the services of a well-trained and practiced theologian, so the services of a diligent designer who brings to the congregation's values and programming a practiced eye are a true gift.

The work of such persons is certainly an asset to a congregation with plenty of resources to bear on the work of design and construction. Such work is absolutely critical for those communities whose limited resources will not be capable of absorbing mistakes and ill-conceived experiments gone awry.

Should these things be sold and the money given to the poor? It's a flawed question. The beautiful place where God and the people meet and the gifts of God are received is the means by which we will not only express and understand the church's mission. It is that place where such a mission will be supplied.

Besides, allowing for a moment that the antimaterialist premise is valid, such a solution would merely shift the sinful burden to the accursed purchaser of such beauty.

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KENNETH SCHMIDT

The Silent Witness: The Visual Arts in the Service of the Church

Questions of aesthetic taste and the role of the visual arts in worship are not questions that stir up theological debate. The preference for various styles of art, or what kind of art to have in the church, whether the style of a stained glass window, or the design and placement of banners, is not a matter of systematic investigation. On the other hand, it cannot be said that no one cares about these topics. Rather, they often give rise to public disagreement, contention and division. There is no lack of "experts" when it comes to the arts and how they serve the church. Ultimately, the old adage, "I may not know much about art, but I know what I like," turns indifference into conflict.

The 20th and current century have witnessed a strained if not tenuous relationship between the church and the visual arts. Yet, in the secular world the visual arts are enjoying increased popularity and use. We are living in a time when the visual arts and visual media are all around us. The average individual encounters thousands of images every day on television, Web sites, magazines, billboards and in a whole host of other venues. The power of various visual media is obvious to the secular world. Great care and planning go into advertising and design as the messages and ideas of culture are given form. Even images that are broadcast quickly via satellite are selected and edited with care.

The visual arts are also enjoying increased attention as artifacts of our culture. Museum construction and attendance are at an all time high. We live in a visual culture, yet take images for granted. And even though it may be "... virtually inconceivable that the Jesus of the New Testament would ever have driven people out of the temple on account of their having decorated it in bad taste ..." (Brown, p. 4), we nevertheless cannot deny the importance, and perhaps even the power of the visual arts in connections with the written and spoken word.

DR. KENNETH SCHMIDT IS A MEMBER OF THE STAFF OF CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, AUSTIN, TEXAS.

This article focuses on the visual arts and how they serve the church. I have used the word *silent witness* in my title because the visual arts are just that. They are silent. Any dialogue that is generated by the work of art comes from the response of the viewer. The work of art provides a setting for thinking and reflection through an involved encounter with the object. In this way, the art object has the potential to give birth, or serve as a "mid-wife" for reflecting on the truths of Scripture.

The Visual Arts: Their Special Role

The arts are a gift from God. They appeal to our senses and to our intellect. We turn to the arts when it is difficult to communicate with words or when we need to communicate beyond words. Sometimes we are at a loss for words. Consider those times when you might have sensed the presence of the Spirit in a worship service, or witnessed the birth of your child, or heard that your child has suddenly been taken away. Or how about standing at the death bed of your mother, hearing her recite the 23rd Psalm three times while holding the pastor's hand, and then closing her eyes in the eternal rest of her Savior.

Intense and engaging human experiences are celebrated and expressed through the visual arts. Let me cite an example from Scripture that illustrates my point; it may even help explain a possible role for the visual arts in the church. This example is the crossing of the Jordan River into the Promised Land by the people of Israel. Imagine them standing on the shore, waiting for the signal to cross. What an exciting day it must have been! Undoubtedly there was singing, storytelling and a good dose of anticipation as the priests carrying the ark of the covenant stepped into the river. As soon as the priests' feet touched the water, the water from upstream stopped, and the people crossed over on dry land.

As the story unfolds, God had more instructions for Joshua:

When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, "Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the priests stood and to carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight. So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, and said to them, "Go over before the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them that the flow of Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord" (Joshua 4:1-7b, NIV).

The stones in this account functioned as art objects. They had a real and physical presence. They involved human action, and they were certainly out of the ordinary, evoking the question, "What do these stones mean?" The context and unusual nature of the stones set up the opportunity to talk about God's love and action in the movement of the children of Israel through the wilderness to the Promised Land. The stones were also large. They would last more than a generation. And it was probably a miracle that the men could even pick them up. It was an unusual event. Just plain old stones brought up on shore and arranged as some sort of memorial. They were an occasion of art.

It is natural for us to turn to the arts to express our reactions to the human experience. We dance, we sing, we create images. We use the arts, and at the same time we share not only the artifact itself, but also the story, and a deep awareness of the experience. When we use the visual arts in the church, we have the opportunity to share not only the artifact itself, but our story, and a deep awareness of God's mystery, love and plan in our life.

Joshua Taylor (1975) considers this special connection between seeing, thinking and knowing:

To look at a work of art is to think. Some people might not call it that—we often limit the word *thinking* to a somewhat pragmatic exercise by which we rationalize various desires, feelings and other uncalled-for promptings of the brain—but in any case, looking at a work of art is a distinctive use of the mind (p. 7).

The combination of spoken and written language with gesture and physical object is synergistic, a very special way of knowing. We might even go so far as to say that an intense engagement with the visual arts is in itself an act of knowing. The visual arts have the power to trigger our ability to comprehend, to understand and remember. These experiences of being human are something our loving God and Savior knows first hand.

The extraordinary gift of God becoming man and living among us is an important visual event that demonstrates God's love for human kind. Our Lord spoke in parables, used metaphor and gave examples that created visual images in the minds of those who heard Him.

The contemporary British painter, David Hockney, claims that you really can't know something without "really seeing it." He also states that in order for us to really see something, we need to draw it. This last point is based on the notion of a slow and careful study of contours, surfaces and forms that inform the artist's knowledge of the subject matter. There is an intensity and engagement in the act of drawing that lead to a high degree of understanding. This engagement intensifies knowledge. Truly seeing something is an intellectual act of knowing. It is analytical, critical and reflective. This is important in all that we encounter visually, but especially important as we design and appoint our worship spaces.

What the Visual Arts Say

Earlier I stated that the visual arts are silent. Well, they are and they aren't. It is also true to say that the visual arts are anything but silent. They have much to tell us about the group of

people who created them. I am reminded of the words of Winston Churchill, "We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us." Churchill was responding to the destruction of the House of Commons by one of the last bombs of an aerial raid during World War II. Even though he spoke specifically of the architecture, we could also include all the furnishings and artifacts that set the context of the building.

We form opinions and formulate an understanding of a space as we decode our visual encounters with their context. The choices we make as we design and appoint our dwellings or gathering places say something about us. Someone who visits our home will formulate opinions based on what they see. Richard Caemmerer explained it this way:

The instant you step inside someone's living room, you have a sense of what the folks are like who live there. Even if they have had time to get ready for you, your eyes will let you know whether they are casual or formal, wealthy or poor, family-oriented, interested in travel, art, books, junk (1983, p. 35).

There is considerable variety in architectural styles, furnishings and manners of worship that have been adopted by the church. Some churches worship in neo-gothic structures with stained glass windows that are quasi medieval, and others include images from popular culture and utilize modern technology as part of the worship experience. In some cases, projected images become the stained glass windows, instructing the faithful with modern means.

The church in western culture seems to be simultaneously confronting and absorbing the cultures of "high" and "low." Some churches are seeking ways to utilize the services of trained visual artists, others seek to engage the work of artists and aesthetes in their midst or community, while others embrace popular media conventions. Some churches may have an arts committee given the task of planning the use of the visual arts in the worship space and liturgy, while others may add visual items with little oversight.



The Arts and Worship

So, how should we use the visual arts in worship? What architectural and cultural style is appropriate? When are the visual arts an important aid to the preaching and teaching of the Word? The answer to these and other questions comes from the gathering community. Liturgy is the work of the people, and the visual arts should be an authentic expression alongside that work. Not a work in conflict or a distraction, but a work that adds depth to our understanding and helps us to remember the great things which God has done for us.

The church in worship is an ordered community of people who share the language and meaning of the liturgy as a true expression of their response to a loving God. This ordered community is ultimately embodied in its cultural artifacts. The architecture, the visual and ecclesiastical arts, the action of the liturgy and the music tell us something about the group that creates them, while potentially conditioning the quality and depth of the worship experience itself. Ultimately this ordered community gathers together because of God's love and plan of salvation for each of us.

As we consider the architectural space and all that is within it, we should strive to have a unified and authentic visual environment that engages the worshipper. The physical relationship and design of architecture, furnishings, visual art and ecclesiastical accoutrements should be orderly, unified and thoughtful. We do not set the visual arts over or against the Word, but they should work together. We use both languages, the language of words and the language of images and symbol to teach the eternal truths of salvation. In this way, the work of art has the potential to provide insight and intensification as it is coupled with Word and liturgy. This process requires planning and thought.

For example, the most popular style of architecture for a church seems to be the Gothic style. Why do so many people appreciate this as an ideal spiritual space for worship? Did Christian architecture reach its zenith in the Middle Ages? No, I think not. Rather, Gothic architecture was an honest

expression of a people at a particular time and place. It embodied mystery, commanded awe and created a unified context for worship. But more importantly, it conveyed the values of the community itself. The building and everything in it were about quality and integrity. The ecclesiastical art was an authentic expression of the people and the time, and it was appropriate. The materials were natural and often times costly. The composition of the building seems musical, and the whole program of architecture and furnishings created a sense of mystery. Our respect for Gothic churches is a longing for an authentic and engaging space that is appointed with appropriate art and supports worship.

Any attempt to copy the past is little more than a "confession that the religious life of the church has lost its capacity for creative self-expression" (Nathan, p. 70). As much as we may want to admire the spiritual qualities of Gothic architecture, the fact remains: we are not Gothic. Nor do most people realize how the Gothic cathedral functioned.

The church was an expression of the community. The structure and visual art of the church communicated the message of the Gospel, but the church also served as a center for learning and even provided a setting for entertainment. Saints, prophets and scenes from the Scripture were combined with depictions of beasts, gargoyles and even humorous figures. The church also provided a stage for liturgical drama, and parish churches were used for community events including dancing, games, festivals and fairs. The Gothic cathedral was a cultural center for the community (Nathan, p. 71).

A Challenge to Leaders

The challenge is to bring the visual arts and Christian faith closer together. There is a pressing need for the creation of authentic art which connects with liturgy and Word without trivializing the message of the Gospel or the integrity of the work of art. There is a need to train pastors, teachers and lay leaders in the visual arts, and equip them for ministry that includes the visual arts. Pastors and Christian leaders should network with artists and art

educators in their community to find ways to connect the visual arts with the church. Some leaders may want to learn more about the visual arts and might enroll in art courses at local colleges and universities.

One more thing: think back to the Joshua account. The "stones of remembrance" were just that. They were stones. Art does not have to have a religious subject matter to function in the church. As a matter of fact, it seems to me that we should be able to look at most any art and use it as an opportunity to witness. The power is not in the art object itself but comes from the heart as we look, ponder and think.

I suspect most people do not have this type of engagement with the visual arts, but it nevertheless remains an important possibility for the church. We need Christian artists, pastors and lay leaders who can see the potential of this connection and model it for the community. Dean W. Nadasdy addresses this topic by affirming the potential interaction of word, image and object:

Liturgy is word and event, word and narrative, word and imagination. Or if left to its words alone, never broken open, never visualized; liturgy can be heard and spoken, but never seen. It will be less evocative then, this imageless liturgy of words, less engaging to the young, less real. To place the liturgy in its aesthetic, biblical and often narrative context maximizes its impact and enhances its memorability. Here the preacher becomes teacher, interpreter, and once again, artist (p. 199).

The visual arts have the potential to serve the church in a meaningful way. Dana Gioia, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, summarizes these ideas in this portion of his poem, *Autumn Inaugural*:

There will always be those who reject ceremony, who claim that resolution requires no fanfare, those who demand the spirit stay fixed like a desert saint, fed only on faith, to worship in no temple but the weather.

He goes on to say:

... symbols betray us. They are always more or less than what is really meant. But shall there be no processions by torchlight because we are weak?

And finally:

Praise to the rituals that celebrate change, old robes worn for new beginnings, solemn protocol where the mutable soul, surrounded by ancient experience grows young in the imagination's white dress.

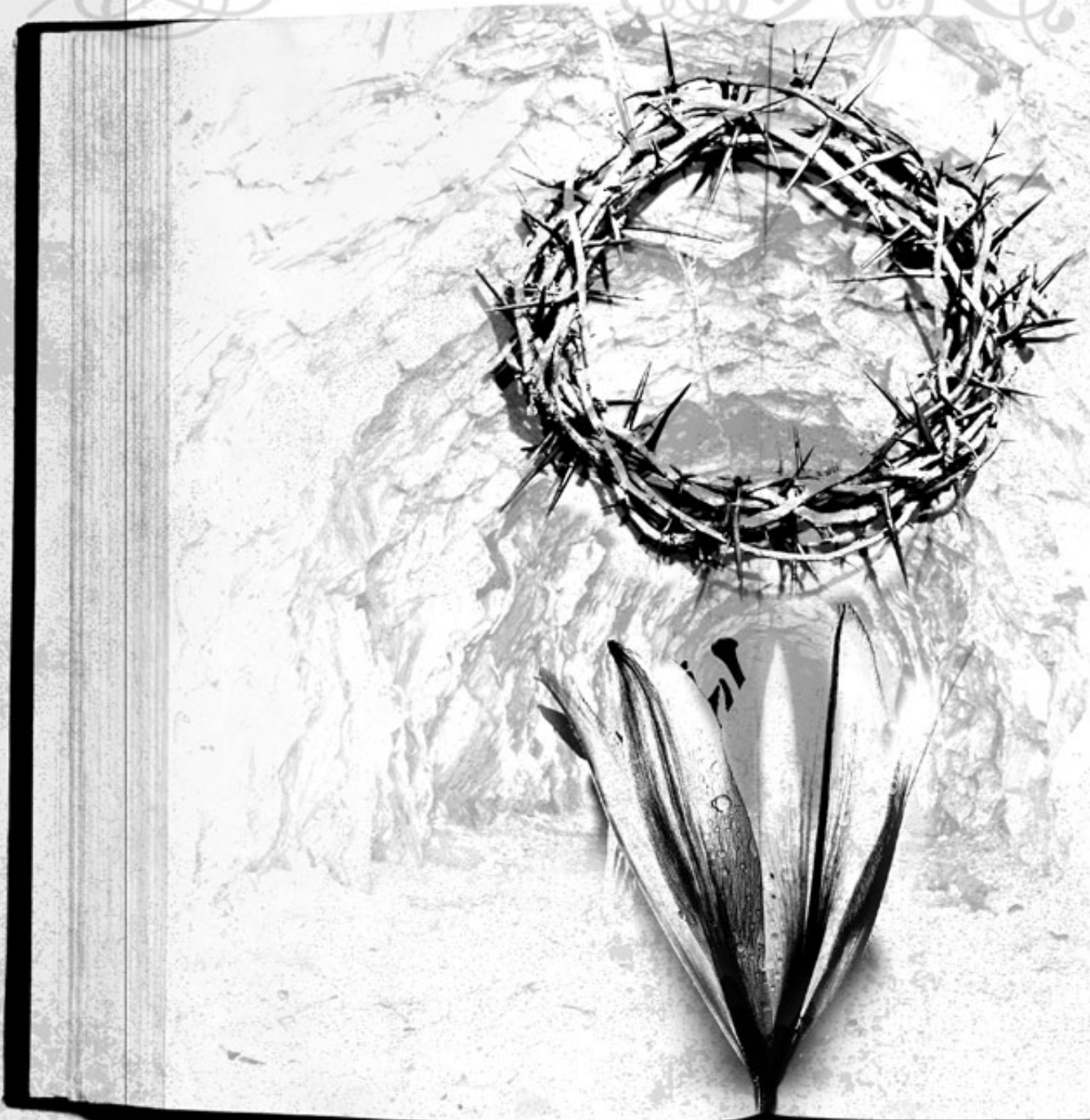
Because it is not the rituals we honor but our trust in what they signify, these rites that honor us as witness—whether to watch lovers swear loyalty in a careless world or a newborn washed with water and oil.

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PAUL BERKBIGLER & BRUCE CREED

Toward a Visual Rhetoric of the Gospel



"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

When we read these words, we are reminded of the important role that language and communication play in our daily lives, as well as in our faith walk. We are made in the image of God, and God places a high importance on good communication. Therefore, it is appropriate to investigate the role of language and communication in worship because worship is one of the most important activities in which Christians engage. Increasingly, technology is becoming a feature of worship, and so there is also a need for a clearer understanding of the role of technology in worship. Primarily, technology has amplified the role of images and visual communication in the worship setting, and so this is a time when it could be helpful to many churches to describe some of the means by which worship can be enriched through technology.

Sermons given during the Easter season often remind us of the importance Christ placed on both telling and hearing the details of Jesus' earthly ministry. When Christ reached Jerusalem for the Passover and rode into the city in triumph, He fully revealed His identity publicly and then told His disciples to go and tell what they had witnessed. It is when Christ no longer keeps His true nature a secret that we each receive our commission to go and tell others about Him. We are commanded to spread the Gospel and to do so by the most effective means, developing our voice after our Savior's model. If we truly follow Christ's call to communicate the Gospel, we will use any available means to spread the Word and tell others of Christ. Today, with options of

integrating technology in worship increasing, many churches are caught up in asking about the role of technology, particularly in relation to communication.

Stripped to its barest meaning, technology simply means using the knowledge we have in a practical way to accomplish a particular task. This definition focuses on human ingenuity rather than on mechanical devices, though the means of technology can be as new as the latest computer development or as old fashioned as the mechanics of the human body. Technology is essentially the drive to use our minds in concert with any available tool to solve problems. That is to say, communication through technology is essential to our human nature.

If communication is important, and if technology is becoming a prominent feature of that communication, then we need to ask some questions. Can technology serve the visual arts in worship? What are the opportunities, challenges and obstacles to communicating the Gospel through technology? How important is the use of technology in worship for both younger and older generations?

An investigation of these questions may help to develop an understanding of the role of technology in worship as well as to help worship planners develop a vocabulary that will facilitate the introduction of technology into worship settings.

Can Technology Serve the Visual Arts in Worship?

Whether or not your church uses technology in worship, the visual aspects of a service are always important, and often are only discovered by worshipers when something makes them uncomfortable or somehow doesn't feel right. The uncomfortable feeling some people may have in worship services that make use of technology and visual images may come when there is a lack of resonance between the image and what they are reading, singing or hearing in the service. Graphic design educator, historian and theoretician Phillip Meggs uses the term graphic resonance to define the harmonious use of image and word.

DR. BRUCE CREED IS PROFESSOR OF COMMUNICATION, CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, NEBRASKA, AND PAUL BERKBIGLER, M.F.A., IS ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ART, CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, NEBRASKA.
BRUCE.CREED@CUNE.EDU
PAUL.BERKBIGLER@CUNE.EDU

Meggs borrows the notion of resonance from music which means “a reverberation or echo, a subtle quality of tone or timber.” Just as there is harmony in music, there should also be harmony among the words and images used in worship. Words and images should resonate in worship for the benefit of the worshipers.

Meggs explains that through technology “Communication is given an aesthetic dimension that transcends the dry conveyance of information, intensifies the message and enriches the experience of the audience.” Communication is accomplished through two crucial building blocks: words and images. Each of these components enables the exchange of information between individuals, and each is an intimately familiar technology used daily in communication. Communication in worship is the same as communication in every other facet of life, though because of the importance we place on the text in worship, we may not always think of images when it comes to planning worship. Nonetheless, it is the consistent use of words and images that facilitates understanding.

Humans are predisposed to visual stimulation. It is little wonder that we reach for those things that can be seen in order to understand and represent the many unseen things that form the foundations of faith and belief. God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; the Devil and his work; and the concept of salvation are outside of anything we can express in words. We seek to render what we know of these things in words, but it is often images that fully describe and quickly communicate these things.

John Berger explains that we are born into a world of image and language, but that we learn to see long before we learn to speak. “It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it [the world].” No less in faith, we need to be reminded that we are in the world but not of the world. There is often a lack of resonance between what we experience in the world and what we understand through faith. Worship provides the opportunity for Christians to see the world through the eyes of faith. Christ explained what our relationship to

the world should be through His parables, and we seek to recreate that understanding through worship.

What are the Opportunities, Challenges and Obstacles to Communicating the Gospel through Technology?

Students of rhetoric and communication have studied and practiced the ancient principles of rhetoric developed in the classical writings of Aristotle and Cicero. Since the time of Augustine, Christians have sought to employ the most ethical possible use of these fundamental principles. The most basic of these principles is the canons of rhetoric. Early rhetorians strove to find the essence of rhetorical study and found consistency and strength in the five fundamental characteristics of rhetorical structure.

The rhetorical canons are: Invention (creativity or originality), arrangement (structure and logic), style (language), memory and delivery. These principles still guide students of rhetoric today, and they can also be applied in consideration of the ways in which Christians proclaim the Gospel in worship.

A brief definition of the canons of rhetoric may help this discussion.

Invention refers to the development and structure of the topic—whether it is original, creative and well-suited to the audience’s interests and attitudes.

Arrangement refers to the structure of the message. Logic and rules of structure focus on the development of good arguments.

Style and language are integral parts of a message. If the language is well-suited to the subject matter and to the audience, the speaker has employed a proper style.

Memory has always been prized as a significant speaking skill. The canon of memory refers not only to the speaker’s capacity for memory, but also for the audience’s memory. What does the speaker do to help the audience remember and process the message?

Delivery includes the study and consideration of the proper use of gestures and other nonverbal expressions, the proper use of the voice and the poise of the speaker.

These canons can be applied to the use of visual technology as well.

- **Invention:** Is the image arresting and appropriate to the development of the topic?
- **Arrangement:** Does the image provide additional structure to the communication goal? Does it sequence ideas properly? Is it appropriate for the subject and context? Does it make a sound argument that is consistent with the message being communicated?
- **Style:** Is the image suited to the audience's ways of thinking? If it is new to them, does it come to them abruptly, or can they identify with it in some elemental way?
- **Memory:** Does the image evoke memories that are consistent with the message being communicated, or does it jar?
- **Delivery:** Has the image been delivered successfully by the technology?

Each canon facilitates an understanding of visual discourse or images as a significant and functional means by which we apprehend meaning in our everyday communication. Visual messages, when they are effective, are structured and composed as carefully as any written or spoken message and may quickly deliver a message to a particular audience. Applying the canons to the structure of a worship service in which technology is used to convey the Gospel means that the features of the images used should carry our thoughts toward the Gospel message and not divert our attention to other things. Technology, properly and carefully applied to worship, does exactly this—it focuses us on the features of worship and reminds us of the depth of meaning within the words and the images they conjure.

Words and images form the essential building blocks of communication, and we can look to the practice of graphic design for models of combining these elements. Graphic design is concerned with the arrangement of words and images in accomplishing communication and offers an understanding of written language that links it inextricably with images. Letters are, at heart, little more





than images of the audible sounds they cue and represent. Words, likewise, are the seen form of the sounds and ideas that they encapsulate, opening into understanding whenever they are seen and the mind “speaks” them in order to comprehend them again.

Written language likewise offers several forms for visual communication, best illustrated by Meggs when he outlines thirteen rhetorical forms within language that offer immediate models for image development:

1. **Simile**—providing comparison or parallel between two unlike things.
2. **Metaphor**—pointing out resemblance, but doing so by substituting one thing for another.
3. **Personification**—representing inanimate objects or abstractions by a human image.
4. **Anthropomorphism**—attributing human traits, thoughts, action and speech to animals or even inanimate objects.
5. **Metonymy**—using the name or image of one thing to stand in for another, related thing.
6. **Synecdoche**—using a part to represent the whole, or vice versa.
7. **Pun**—using the phenomena that one symbol can have two or more meanings, or that two or more symbols can have similar or identical images but different meanings. It is the use of words in a way that suggests different meanings or plays upon similar sounds or spellings.
8. **Parody**—imitating the style of some other work, often with humorous or satirical intent.
9. **Hyperbole**—exaggerating for the sake of emphasis.
10. **Litotes**—understating a negative concept as a way of expressing an affirmative, such as “He is not a bad photographer” to mean that he is a good photographer.
11. **Antithesis**—contrasting sharply two opposing ideas or thoughts to intensify their difference.
12. **Irony**—deliberately contrasting, presenting the opposite of what would be expected.
13. **Allegory**—representing an idea or topic symbolically.

Each of these rhetorical forms has, like the rhetorical canons, been thought of first in linguistic terms. However, the visual dimensions are easily discovered.

1. **Simile**—is there a comparison offered between the image and the word?
2. **Metaphor**—does the image substitute for the word (or vice versa)?
3. **Personification**—is there a way to represent an abstract idea in human form (for example, we are the body of Christ)?
4. **Anthropomorphism**—can abstract ideas be translated into animal or even inanimate forms (as in the Devil is a prowling lion)?
5. **Metonymy**—can one image stand for another (for example, a dove as the symbol of peace)?
6. **Synecdoche**—how does the image capture a part of the idea in such a way that allows the audience to supply the concept of the whole?
7. **Pun**—does the image provide more than one meaning?
8. **Parody**—how does the image seem at once familiar and unfamiliar? Can the image extend and develop the intent of the message?
9. **Hyperbole**—does the image exaggerate and emphasize in an appropriate manner?
10. **Litotes**—can the image take a perceived negative, and turn it on its head, positively?
11. **Antithesis**—does the image provide sharp contrast between two opposing ideas or thoughts to intensify their difference?
12. **Irony**—does the image provide a surprising contrast to the expectations established by the word?
13. **Allegory**—how is the image symbolic of the concepts embodied in the word?

Discovering the visual dimensions of these rhetorical forms offers communicative precedence which can be carried into technological use.

How Important Is the Use of Technology in Worship for Both Younger and Older Generations?

Technology is already present in worship, simply because technology is ubiquitous in our lives. Some of us are more comfortable with this fact than others, perhaps because of the

ways in which technology has developed over the years and subsequently been introduced to the different generations. There are those among us who remember the days when everything was written by hand rather than with a word processor. What for one generation is experienced as the state of the art is for the next generation experienced as the status quo.

The development and introduction of technology has not only made us aware of the different ways in which we process words, but it also has pointed out the myriad ways in which we now process images. Film and television celebrate disunion between idea and image often purely to shock us and to get our attention. This break in relation is rarely repaired for the sake of the information still to come; it is often either sidestepped or completely disregarded as the contents of the message are delivered. This technique is gradually being applied to all generations. For example, advertising that uses songs of the 1960s to sell any product regardless of its relation to songs of the Baby Boomers.

Even so, Boomers and other generations may not always be challenged by the notion that the contents of the Gospel and the contents of their lives are directly correlated. For Christ to have incorporated into His parables the simple image of drinking from a well shows us the relationship between our lives and His Gospel message. For many young people, however, even these parables sometimes do not resonate in their lives. There seems to be disunion between image and meaning because of the proliferation of uncorrelated images in advertising, film and other texts that they see daily. These young readers then interact with technology and media in which images have been used intentionally often without the expectation or realization that the images have been manipulated with purpose. Worship can bridge this gap between the careful and careless use of images by providing what we have earlier referred to as graphic resonance. The caution for users of technology in worship is to always remember that there is a need for resonance between images and words.

If the different ways in which we accept technology in our lives tell us that there is a generational technology gap, that gap can be

bridged in worship. Worship is a place where harmony and resonance are seemingly expected and where we are often uncomfortable with dissonance. Within the church, we are often text-centered, particularly because Scripture is the basis of our worship. We are sometimes so concerned with the words and terminology that we miss the rich messaging potential of the image. Our youth are intimately familiar and comfortable with reading images and gathering multiple meanings which can be shaped and guided by a more limited textual overlay. Roland Barthes observed: "Formerly, the image illustrated the text (and made it clearer): today, the text loads the image, burdening it with a culture, a moral and imagination."

This is the state of the art becoming the status quo. One generation has been raised on text, whereas a new generation is being raised on images. Formerly textual production technology held preeminence; today image editing and creation technology is now more prevalent. Marshall McLuhan asserted that "The alphabet and print technology fostered and encouraged a fragmenting process, a process of specialism and of detachment. Electric technology fosters and encourages unification and involvement." There is now a strong demand not only for proficient readers and writers, but also for literate and fluent image makers.

Toward a Visual Rhetoric of the Gospel

Worship is a communal space where careful communication is expected. Worship is a space of intergenerational contact. The generations are speaking in twin dialects—words and images. Given that communication is accomplished through these two building blocks, we have, in worship, the perfect lens through which we are able to examine the world and our place in it. Christ is that lens, and it is through worship that we develop our ability to see through Him.

Technology is compatible with this lens and can enhance our ability to see in the same way that a new pair of glasses allows us to see more clearly. Christ, the lens, is both word and *Word*. The word is the delivered word of God in the textual sense, while *Word* is God made tangible in Christ. Communicating the Gospel through technology entails the simultaneous delivery of both. Worship provides this communicative space and ultimately offers us Christ, the lens.

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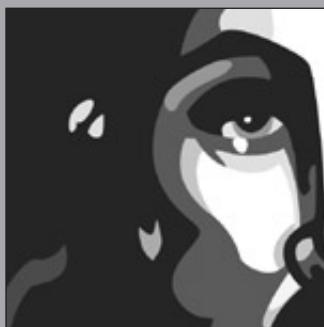
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The Center for Liturgical Art



The Center for Liturgical Arts is an outreach program of the department of art at Concordia University, Nebraska. The center brings together students, faculty, and other church professionals to collaborate in the design and creation of art for the church. Many of our projects include temporary liturgical installations that facilitate worship and the teaching of God's Word. The center also works with architects and liturgical consultants in the design of worship space and the creation of ecclesiastical art.

Our Mission

The Center for Liturgical Art seeks to encourage and assist the church in its ministry through the visual arts.

We seek to accomplish this by

- *Promoting the use of the visual arts in worship*
- *Providing educational outreach programs in the visual arts*
- *Providing development, design and production of visual art resources*



The staff and faculty of the Center for Liturgical Art and Concordia's department of art are available to churches and congregations for presentations, consultations and training seminars. We also accept commissions for liturgical art as we work with you to enhance the silent witness of the visual arts in worship and ministry.

For more information, please contact us.

Mark Anschutz, Acting Director of the Center for Liturgical Art
Mark.Anschutz@cune.edu • 402.643.7431

William Wolfram, Acting Department Chair of the Department of Art
William.Wolfram@cune.edu • 402.643.7499



book reviews

Good Taste, Bad Taste, and Christian Taste: Aesthetics in Religious Life

Frank Burch Brown

New York: Oxford University Press, 2003

Frank Burch Brown's book provides the kind of broad-based theological and philosophical framework that can nourish an appreciation of modern and contemporary visual arts, an appreciation that is necessary for any thoughtful contribution to the development of contemporary worship. Brown is not driven by polemics. In the introduction, Brown admits, "I have come to believe that matters of aesthetic taste—in a broad and non-elitist sense—are often intimately tied to various dimensions of morality (love, responsiveness, responsibility) and of religion (faith, worship, theology)."

The first chapters offer an historical survey of taste. Here Brown introduces—and embodies—two diametrically opposed responses to religious art that he will return to throughout his book. The Danish existentialist philosopher Søren Kierkegaard represents a deep skepticism of religious art, and the Romantic poet/painter William Blake represents the enthusiastic response. The former sees art as a means to avoid serious religious commitment, while the latter regards art to be a vehicle for just such serious commitment. Brown's agenda is to sketch an "ecumenical taste," a state that would develop forms of perception, enjoyment and judgment that can "recognize and indeed relish certain aesthetic and religious differences," "learn to discern, as an act of love, what others find delightful and meaningful in art," and finally, "to notice points in life and worship where aesthetic aims and religious aspirations are wedded to one another."

The next chapter focuses on writers for whom art had come to replace religion. Brown offers his own discussion of the concept of art-for-art's sake, which he refers to as "aesthetic purism," and he discusses "strict" and "moderate" forms. In contrast to this purism, Brown presents an example of an integralist approach to art that does not separate religion from the aesthetic and art. Brown concludes this chapter with an analysis of the iconoclasm of postmodern theory, which rightly "contradicts simplistic views that postmodernism is a welcome reprieve for the contemporary Christian artist."

Brown's next chapter discusses the movement from a "taste for art" toward a "thirst for God." Here Brown introduces Augustine into the argument between Kierkegaard and Blake, which he will utilize as a means to resolve the antithesis. Although he ultimately argues against the beauty of the world, Augustine nevertheless offers important observations and justifications for the appreciation of beauty. Brown is keen to capitalize on Augustine's remarkable but extremely cautious sensitivity to beauty. In chapter five Brown offers an analysis of kitsch, not as a means to dismiss it outright, but to make sense of it from the perspective of what he calls "ecumenical taste." It is this "ecumenical taste" that is the subject of chapter six, as Brown uses music, his own area of expertise, to affirm this broad but discriminating taste. Brown's book is littered with specific examples, from music, art, poetry, film and architecture, which locate his argument.

In chapter seven Brown focuses on the relationship between sacred and secular spaces in China as a means to gain a different perspective on the relationship between the secular and the sacred. An analysis of the history of modern art, with its sacred space (art museums), sacred artifacts (works of art), and priests (artists) can offer another perspective on the relationship between the secular and sacred, a perspective that regards the modern and contemporary artists' yearning for an honoring of the sacred to be a powerful manifestation of the inherent human desire to participate in and reflect divine order and its beauty.

The final two chapters focus increasingly more attention on the role of music in worship, and in fact, the role of art in worship in general. For Brown, as it was for the Patristic Fathers, the rule of public worship (*lex orandi*) is the material manifestation of the rule of belief (*lex credendi*) as the former shapes and protects the latter. Brown concludes with the important insight that Christianity is not merely a set of beliefs, but it is a "practice" and it must be practiced "artfully." It also requires discipline. And this is exactly what Brown argues about taste—it is not easy, and it requires practice. The challenge that Brown sees is that most Christians assume art that is Christian (or worth a Christian's attention) should be easily accessible. When art is not, it is more often than not marginalized and dismissed as "elitist." But this can also be the case with

the practice of Christianity, in which many evangelical Christians are put off by aspects of the faith that require practice and discipline in large part because their assumption is that "their faith should not be difficult." Taste for art, just like a taste for the spiritual, must be practiced and developed. It is a discipline. In the words of the Psalmist, taste and see that the Lord is good.

Daniel A. Siedell

Visiting Professor

Concordia University, Nebraska

Adapted from Daniel Siedell,

"Art and the Practice of Evangelical Faith—
A Review Essay," *Christian Scholar's Review* 34/1
(Fall 2004)

Spirit in Drama: A Practical Guide for Churches and Schools

David W. Eggebrecht

St. Louis:

Concordia Publishing House, 2004

David Eggebrecht, author of *Spirit in Drama*, seeks to provide a practical guide for incorporating religious drama in Christian education, worship and fellowship. He defines religious drama as a play having a central biblical theme. It may be an enactment of a biblical story, an enactment based on a Bible story set in a contemporary context or a modern story that examines Christian spiritual struggles. Eggebrecht contends that religious drama "has the responsibility of bringing God's Word and saving message to the people" through excellent theatre productions that help audiences identify with biblical narratives and living their faith.

He sees the members of a production company as a community of believers who use their God given gifts to nurture their faith lives as well as their audience's. Thus the performance of religious drama has an educational purpose in Christian congregations as well as schools. Dr. Eggebrecht draws on his numerous directing experiences in parish and community theatres as well as his work as director of drama at Concordia University Wisconsin. He provides an excellent model of how a Christian director plans, collaborates with others, and leads a theatre production. Even experienced directors will find his examples

of how to handle the inevitable challenges of coordinating the work of volunteers and theatre professionals helpful. The book also contains prayers and exhortations to dedicate rehearsals as well as performances to building up the body of Christ.

The book addresses the areas of play selection, production planning, auditions, rehearsals, public relations, performances and building drama programs. However, each topic is rather briefly addressed. The author encourages the reader to consult additional books on theatre production for more information, but does not provide a bibliography of useful titles.

Spirit in Drama is organized by topic rather than moving from simple uses of drama to more complex. How to produce less complex dramatic forms, such as choral speaking, readers theatre, role playing and character monologues is not as well developed as the guidelines for full-length dramas or musicals. The author provides practical, but general, recommendations for time, resources and personnel needed to produce short dramas, longer plays and musicals. For example, a list of items that will need to be budgeted, including royalty fees, is provided, but no cost estimates for the markedly increasing fees of each form are made.

This book is most helpful for persons with some theatre background who would like to begin a religious drama program. It is also recommended for pastors, principals and directors of Christian education who seek information about the personnel and resources needed to develop drama ministries in churches or schools.

Dr. Mira Wiegmann
Professor of Communication and
Theatre Arts and Director of Drama
Concordia University, Nebraska

Silver Screen, Sacred Story: Using Multimedia in Worship

Michael Bausch
Alban Institute, 2002.

Silver Screen, Sacred Story is a language training book. It is an excellent resource to help people develop or refine their use of the visual communication language. Bausch includes a good balance of theological, theoretical and practical concepts.

For those who are still wondering if electronic tools have a place in worship or are struggling with why it is important to communicate visually, the first section presents a strong historical and theological justification for using this language and tools—set to assist people in worshipping their Savior and compose more effective communication. I appreciated his comparison to a congregation that refused to use a new language in worship—English—and how they disappeared while the offshoot that used the new language prospered. If you've already decided visual communication is important, don't get bogged down in this justification and miss the really valuable concepts in the rest of the book.

If your congregation is just beginning to use electronic visual communication tools in worship or is exploring their increased use, Bausch offers some excellent strategies to develop support. He encourages both embracing and resisting technology, cultural trends and media to be certain that they are incorporated with integrity and humility. He includes some very practical suggestions on helping groups to understand the potential and begin to use the language.

The strongest part of this book is the third section—learning the language. Projection and other visuals tools offer so much more than just being an announcement billboard or electronic worship folder. Through his descriptions of some very creative use of visuals, he motivates the user to start thinking visually. His concepts will spark more meaningful and effective worship. This section should be read by anyone who is involved in planning and leading worship—clergy, musicians, worship committees and other lay leaders.

"As with learning to communicate with any new language, worship leaders will want to develop their electronic language skills as they begin to think and speak in another

worship language," writes Bausch. He offers a variety of practical ideas to begin this process of developing fluency. His suggestions will help those who communicate dominantly with words to learn to communicate with visuals and better understand those of us who think in pictures.

It would be impossible to learn Spanish when there are no Spanish words in the instruction. In the same way it is unfortunate that this book about language development never used the language to communicate—the book is almost all words with a few poor illustrations. It would be very valuable for someone to do a companion piece that was dominantly visual to introduce and develop this language.

One very important visual tool—lighting—was completely overlooked. This part of the visual language is critical, and it is hard to imagine not integrating this tool set. Any individual or group that is developing their visual language would be well served to study use of lighting in theaters and higher-end retail displays.

Overall this is an excellent resource for those who are just starting to use electronic visual tools in worship and for those who have been using these tools for many years. Bausch does an excellent job introducing and expanding the use of this important language.

Peter Wille
Signal Systems
St. Louis, Missouri
peter@signalsys.com





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