

ARCHITURE AS A MEANS OF CONVERGENCE BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

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Abstract. *The changes in architecture are a reflection of changes in our own perception of the world. This becomes evident in the multitude of forms present in modern day churches.*

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Over the course of history, churches were supposed to be something greater, whether it's the Hagia Sophia of Constantinople, the Reims Cathedral, or the Church of Saint Andrew's at the Quirinal. At each stage the architecture corresponded to the needs of the people. Small chapels were being constructed to let people commune with God individually. Small churches were being constructed to accommodate small congregations. As such architects were faced with the task of making the space more visually distinctive and spiritual.

The European churches each represented their respective periods. One of the main reasons for that are the method and materials of construction. Traditional main building materials like stone, old brick, timber and earth are all absorbent, and relatively 'soft'. They allow the building to both breathe and to move slightly. And seeing as the newer materials didn't mix well with the old format due to the older ones only being replaceable like with like. Modern materials, such as hard bricks, cement-based mortars and renders, modern paints and external sealants are specifically designed to keep moisture out of the building by creating an impervious physical barrier. They are also designed to be solid, rigid, inflexible. This in turn led to a revolt of shape. A prime example of that would be the St. Mary's Church on the North Sea coast in Schilg with its curved glass roof construction reminiscent of dunes or waves. The San Josemaría Escrivá Church in Mexico doesn't externally resemble a church at all, only its light contrast and fish layout show its true purpose.

The interior displays the same geometry, optical illusions and play of light similar to those of Ancient Rome only more minimalistic. This is a main trait of the modern architecture, however it is somewhat different in regards to religion. Through this, sacred long-lasting relationships with visitors are created. Ranging from a cozy monk-like modest chapel to elaborate ethereal cathedrals with vaulted archways stretching to the heavens, their variety of worship spaces is as diverse as it is personal.

The same tendencies appear not only in Christianity but also the Islamic faith, the multi-colored aspect of the mosques is disappearing, giving way to the geometrical shapes and concrete structures.

The Orthodox are a conservative religion, however there already are some modernist projects, which borrow visually and spiritual aspects from traditional Orthodox architecture but with some added minimalism. The main problem of today is to bridge the gap between the generations of religion and through its modern appearance provide a comfortable place for people. As such the altar and choir areas need to be widened so that people can see what is happening, as well as dressing room. The candles are another problem, because of them the arches and walls are covered in soot. This can be combated by installing a centralized ventilation system. Russian churches were practically without heating and thus the windows were made smaller. This isn't as big of a problem nowadays and the churches can be brighter and more spacious.

There are several more examples such as a project to turn an abandoned television tower in Yekaterinburg, or the St. Joseph the Betrothed Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church. It seems that at first the Orthodox were experimenting with the church architecture, whereas now due to their conservative nature now there is a divide between the generations. The same symbolism can be expressed using different shapes and methods.

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