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Monumentality and the struggle for collective expression in the twentieth century

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MONUMENTALITY AND THE STRUGGLE FOR COLLECTIVE EXPRESSION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

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ABSTRACT

MONUMENTALITY AND THE STRUGGLE FOR COLLECTIVE EXPRESSION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

by

WILLIAM H. McBEATH, JR.

Since institutions have existed they have yearned to express themselves. Throughout history collective bodies have sought for architecture to help define their mission and participate in the life of their institutions. Society continues to value architecture that can rise above function and communicate the commitment and aspirations of a specific institution at various levels.

Yet in this century when the demand for collective expression has intensified, the traditional means by which such expression has been achieved in architecture has come under attack. Monumentality has been devalued and some would discard it. Collective expressions for institutions are possible and needed. This thesis takes a critical look at monumentality in this century and then attempts to achieve collective expression without traditional methods of appropriation. The vehicle for this exploration is a seminary for the Alliance of Baptists on the campus of the University of Richmond in Richmond, Virginia.
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Monumentality

Monumentality Defined

"Monuments are human landmarks which men have created as symbols for their ideals, for their aims, and for their actions." Monuments become cultural markers which document the history and serve to remind future generations of those who built them. Often a monument is self serving, perceived by its creators as a static work which attempts to defy time and changing meaning. It is intended to freeze a specific memory forever. This limiting and often detrimental use of architecture has caused monumentality to be severely questioned in this century.

Monuments can be so much more than simply historical markers, they can literally stand for something greater than an individual or single event. A monument can convey to a community — a city, a nation, or a world — about the cherished ideas and aspirations of its individual or institutional builder.

A monument can "solidify the society it addresses." The idea that we shape our buildings and then they in turn shape society is certainly not a new or unattempted idea. Monuments serve to authenticate and inspire institutions by embodying their dominant beliefs.

The desire to express is a product of the will to be. Humans have always attempted to express something about themselves in their architecture. For me this is what separates building from architecture: architecture strives to express of something greater than its functional purpose; it wants to be monumental. A monument becomes that which transcends function, yet the functioning of an institution may play a vital role in the increased sense of monumentality that a building achieves. "Every institution should be

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2 Ibid., p. 62
3 This wording owes to Louis Kahn's ideas about architecture and institutions, which I will elaborate on later in this paper.
able to express those intangible qualities which are the reason it exists." "Every building that an architect builds is answerable to an institution."

Monumentality then becomes the quality found in those "human landmarks" which have been able to embody the ideas, aims, and actions of those who created them and to communicate these attributes to others. True monumentality lies in its "intensity of expression, elemental formal power, dignity, and gravity; in a phrase, it is a matter of lasting presence." This definition does not require a monumentality of size or an importance at a scale of the city.

An object which satisfies the enduring need for collective expression is monumental. Should not all buildings which serve an institution strive for monumentality? Even if the particular institutional expressions are not static or eternal, the need for expression is a perpetual desire. Thus the architect should not define the institution, but should be a servant to the ideas and ideals of the institution. Monuments vary in scale and importance to the life of the city. Common human collectives include a family, a neighborhood, a city, and a nation. But some human communities are institutional rather than geographic: people bound by common convictions and intentions. Today when we speak of collectives they can no longer be defined as in the past century. Who is an American, what makes up a nation of people, or who does a government represent are all hazy question to many in this century?

*Monumentality Under Attack*

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4 The wording of this idea of institutions and their desire to express is indebted to Louis Kahn.

5 It should be noted that Giodon in his *Nine Points of Monumentality* talks about the monument outliving the period in which it originated, and constituting "a heritage for future generations." I feel that monumental works must leave a lasting impression, but that does not mean that the monument itself must last for generations or longer than the institution which built it. Certainly the Tower of Babel or Albert Speer's Cathedral of Ice can be considered monumental works. They effected the life of those who experienced them and today are still powerful and persistent images in the minds of those who have heard or seen the images or heard the stories of these immense events in history.

4 I will attempt to use the word monumental only in relationship to its ability to embody ideas, not in relationship to size or magnitude.

7 This essay does not infer that all buildings should become equal monuments in terms of scale or importance of the level of the city. Hierarchy and ordering within the city is vital and is insupportable if monumentality is to be achieved.
The idea of monuments and monumentality has come under attack in this century. This attack has led to the distortion and displacement of monumentality. Though these attacks are not without some merit, the blind revolt against monumentality tends to be short sighted. Historically, monuments which attempted to memorialize an individual or institution were frequently guilty of reducing history to a series of vivid simplicities which were then impressed upon the imagination. They shared a very narrow view of a complex experience. The monument evolved from a game of simultaneously expressing and suppressing selected aspects of what it is attempting to commemorate. Sometimes the monument has served to proliferate lies, or to enforce the will of a one group of individuals upon another. In the first half of this century alone the world witnessed Nazi Germany, communist Russia, fascist Italy, and capitalistic America throw themselves into immense building programs to shore up support and give confidence through a new physical presence.

After World War II another wave of criticism attacked the use of monumental architecture, those who had been oppressed or had their voices go unheard severely questioned the appropriateness of the authoritative monument. Even before World War II Walter Gropius wrote about the death of the monument: “the old monument was a symbol for a static conception of the world now overruled.” Monumentality has become problematic. How do we use and control it?

Monuments have given “meaning to life by providing communities and groups with a way to communicate their traditions and beliefs from generation to generation.” The monument can renew a valued idea to the consciousness and restore faith in an ideal to a community. Collective memory is essential for the survival of society. The collective memory forms a basis for our common understanding and group action. Social unity is called upon subtly during every moment of community life. This is never more apparent than in times of crisis. Historically we have seen that “it is sometimes vitally necessary to focus the thoughts of a group upon some past person or event, to get people to remember

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together, perhaps because a new and common enterprise is in mind which demands (they) act together, but often simply because the unity of the group is thereby affirmed." The monument which can embody some transcendental ideal through time can serve as a rallying point, uniting the community it serves.

Defining a community or identifying a cause which created the institution is not as possible as it once was. Today architecture used for a monumental purpose is often viewed as oppressive and violent, particularly when it involves an attempt to glorify conflict between one group and another. The war memorial has played a prominent role in the history of monumental architecture and has been at the center of attacks on monumentalism. Therefore it may be at the center of this controversy that we can find some answers to questions about monumentality which can then be applied to other institutions which seek to express themselves. There has been a significant transformation in the way we commemorate wars and those who died in them. Tracing the evolution can enlighten our understanding of monumentality and point to the roles monumentality can play in the future for all types of institutions.

War memorials, similar to those for great civic leaders, have historically suppressed certain aspects and consequences which were part of the conflict experience. They consciously denied or ignored the enormous negative impacts on the communities involved. Warriors (victorious or defeated) were glorified as heroic. Monuments generally assume the progress of society under gifted leadership guided by a benevolent Deity.

This faith in the continuing ability of individuals or governments to make a positive difference became essentially an ideological choice in the second half of the twentieth century. Many began to view this as a rather naive perception of the world. Monuments viewed as narrow or uncritical in scope drew increasing skepticism.\footnote{William Gass, "Monumentality/Mentality," Opposites 25: Monument/Memory (Rizzoli, New York, NY, Fall, 1982) p. 130} This can first be seen in what the war memorial began to commemorate in this century. No longer did the memorials of this century celebrate the achievement of the living, but the sacrifice of those \footnote{It is quite ironic that World War I "which irretrievably shattered European civilization allowed a final and supreme expression of the Renaissance humanist tradition in stone." (Silent Cities, p. 3)}
who died. “For your tomorrow we gave our today,” is a recurring theme after World War I.

Another problem that surfaced in this century was that of authorship. Who decided for whom the community would undertake memorial action? And if society can selectively choose its memory, what kind of recollections will endow our monuments, and who will decide? The twentieth century has seen a questioning of the ability for any one person or group to speak with authority for a whole community or society. Professor Ackerman writes that we “live in a society that does not have a system of shared beliefs from which true monumental expression can emerge.”11 If we take as fact the we share no common denominator and we can make no collective statements, what does that mean for society? What course does the city or architecture have to take? Is architecture now free to become the self-indulgent art of building spaces which primary serve the desires of its creator? Can we not find appropriate uses for monumentality, without it requiring an authoritative or privileged reading?

We will also need to ask if it is vital that those who experience the monument are aware of the struggle, the paradox, and the contradictions of the idea or value represented?

The Need for Monumentality

Regardless of the attacks on monumentalism and the idea of collective beliefs in the late twentieth century, “public myths, religious beliefs, state aspirations, and cultural aims still require articulation.” Perhaps now more than ever, people cannot separate themselves from the need for a tangible symbol or place which has special meaning. We still feel a need to build physical reminders of our presence on this earth that says something about who we are to ourselves, to our neighbors, and to future generations so that our values and accomplishments are not forgotten. The physical presence serves to stabilize and continually enrich the community as it passes from one generation to another. It is the awareness of an ever increasingly synthetic society, that ‘we’ desire an analytic approach to ‘our’ understanding of institutions and society at large.

11 “Monumentality and the City” (introductory editorial), Harvard Architectural Review, No. IV., (M.I.T. Press, Spring, 1984)
The "master narrative" which created the old monument is in exile, overthrown by a new perception of the society and the individual. In this century it has become a troubling idea that old myths embodied in stone can become new truths accepted and embraced by society. No longer will the statement made by institutional buildings or memorials go without questioning. This should not be interpreted as the death of monumentality as some would like us to believe. Monumentality in architecture can serve a variety of institutions that desire expression, it is not limited to an elite segment of society. It is the perception of its use which should be challenged. Abraham Lincoln had it right, memorial entities can become social contracts in which a group binds itself, society at large, or both. Lincoln described it this way:

"... our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation... Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation... can long endure... We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live... But in a larger sense we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract... It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us, that from these honored dead we take increase devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain... and that government of the people... shall not perish from the earth."12

The monument's role will be to remind society of a solemn obligation taken with those who have gone before and those yet to come. It has the ability to affect our thoughts and decisions for generations. It serves to keep alive the spirit, not only of those who died at a particular site participated in a specific struggle, but also of future individuals who will

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12 Abraham Lincoln, *Speech at the Dedication of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg*, November 19, 1863. (Gettysburg Address)
share these desires and ideals. It becomes a living monument which can continue to remind and fix an idea in the collective. It not only immortalizes a memory, but also serves as a guide for the future. “As such, monuments have been considered by some students of human nature to be measures of people’s progress along the road of civilization because they commemorate those principles they preserve, honor, and cherish.” How do we go about preserving and enriching that which we cherish in our society today?

We need to redefine monumentality so we can stop building the ‘empty shells’ Giedion referred to in his *Nine Points of Monumentality*. Defining a society, an institution, or a collective may be increasingly difficult but this does not mean they do not exist or that they no longer desire or deserve expression. As human beings we are dependent on community and need our ideas to be reinforced by others. The patron may change, the fluctuations in the communal voice may be stronger, but the desire for a collective statement is there. A singular statement doesn’t have to imply a monolithic collective. Within a statement there can be room for individual expression and interpretation. Monumentality needs to serve the common spirit and the shared desires of an institution, whether it is the home, the school, the church, or city hall, without eliminating the “other”.

*The Life of the Monument*

Notwithstanding their initial intent, the community must remember that the meaning of a monument may not remain static or fixed. Most all architecture over time is endowed with certain meanings, intended or otherwise. Monuments prominent in the life of a city can often become icons larger than themselves, taking on meaning and identity which is larger than the collective force which created them. The Eiffel Tower, the Washington Monument, and the Chrysler Building all take on qualities which their original institutions could not have imagined. Is the monument ever finished, becoming an architectural artifact that must be frozen in time? What happens when the institution outgrows its architecture or the institution dies leaving behind its buildings?

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13 This understanding of the Gettysburg Address is indebted to my reading of J.B. Jackson.
14 Gass, p. 136
What is the language of monumental architecture? What is the text of monumentality? Christian Norberg - Schultz believes that architectural language in the blending of topology, morphology, and typology. It is through the mastering of these three factors that our places come alive. Unfortunately many architects rely almost exclusively on the existing ‘readable’ text of typology in order to obtain a certain level of monumentality reserved for ‘special’ works of architecture. Architects have relied on traditional or known architectural forms to give their designs ‘monumentality.’ Tradition, or an inherited architectural language, becomes a crutch for these professionals. This can become an acute problem when the community, in attempting to hold on to cherished values in a rapidly changing society, demands the architect use ‘understood’ forms and ornamentations. Turning to easily read or ‘proven’ forms of architecture the community attempts to drag the past into the future, not only in spirit, but in form. Tradition as a crutch limits the potential growth and expression of the institution. Institutions or groups are in continual change, as are the implied meanings of specific architectural forms, though not at the same pace, or in the same direction of change. Why then do we attempt to use the same forms again and again for changing institutions at different points in their history?

Much is asked of the modern monument by the institutions that build them, possibly more than ever before. Monumentality in this century has been achieved only by those who were willing to make profound searches into the human condition. This should only lead to stronger work if architects are willing to answer the challenge. The authentic monument should reveal “the profound new bond of form and content. It enriches social life and public space with symbolic form capable of lasting inspiration. It will serve as a repository of memories and an imaginative stimulus to new courses of action. In a sense it must be a microcosm of the city. Binding past patterns and present aspirations into a coherent and dynamic whole. The authentic civic monument takes on the flavor of a genuine collective expression.”15 Society at large no longer embraces an analytic strategy coming from rational academia. The essential, the authentic, the ability to perceive and explain the total picture is severely challenged today. The entire concept of culture, the

15 Curtis, p. 85
elements which define societies, nationalities, races, or specific institutions is changing. We are moving away from the essentializing modes of thought to see culture as a process, an interweaving or collage that makes up "our global village."

An obvious problem faced by Modernism in the first half of this century was expression on the scale of an institution, or city, or nation when the vocabulary of modern architecture aimed at a unified global context. If is fascinating to compare Hitler's plans for Berlin and Roosevelt's plans for Washington in the 1930's. Leaders of two countries locked in mortal combat, attempting to apply strikingly similar architectural languages to achieve vastly different political agendas. (Or were their agendas so different in nature?) Both turned to established architectural vocabulary to achieve the desired results. The Modern monument was not able to free itself from tradition, and today society still holds values from the past and feels a need for a connection to that past in order to determine who they are and predict where they are going. On the other hand, though society must not fall into the trap of Walter Benjamin's angel who, in attempting to hold onto the past, is forced to fly into the future with back turned.

Institutions, and especially their memorials, are generally concerned with preserving values that have an established tradition or reference to the past. This is one explanation why so many of today's great modern monuments are indebted to an historic tradition. New and dynamic forms frequently fail to make connections to the past as legible as a traditional architectural vocabulary, no matter how suggestive or profound the new forms may be. At times a particular institution will attempt to use forms that it perceives to have an established meaning or desired association with values. Using these forms also helps assure their meaning will not be misunderstood. There is also the desire for an 'understood' architectural language to describe the new and unfamiliar place in history which a particular community may find itself. The dilemma is this: Is it still "crucial that we re-establish the thematic associations invented by (a) culture in order for architecture to represent the mythic associations of society?" or can we reveal, in the unresolved ambiguities of a new architectural language, the questions posed by the modern world?
The architect is shaman, standing between the physical world and the spiritual world, attempting to fuse them together. A rather glorified analogy perhaps, but one which society, not the architect, has demanded.

Communication between the monument and the institution’s publics must occur on many levels. Easily digested icons must work almost subliminally. It is the ability of the monument to work as a meaningful object both explicitly and implicitly that will decide the character and quality of the work. If the monument rejects interpretation at different levels it becomes a fraud; devaluing the ideal or individual it was attempting to honor or immortalize.

This may explain why so many of the great monuments throughout history have been non-committal. Strikingly similar forms becoming a “tribute to the platonic forms, to the purity, beauty, and nobility of Mathematics, of Mind. And the monumental monument tends to be, in this way, an open emblem. It tends to be FOR RENT.”¹⁶ What does this mean for the Post-Modern era? Is this yet another paradoxical dilemma? It is often society and time that will begin to apply meaning and value to the monument. “The thrust of history keeps changing the past, blocking one segment from view while raising another from obscurity.”¹⁷ The monument’s definition and understanding are fluid, constantly being reworked over time. The institution which gave it life often dies or alters unrecognizably, and the work becomes its own self, embodied with meaning which can diminish or increase with time. The monument then finds itself in “double jeopardy.” “Memory is all that sustains its meaning, but its physical form will have to survive the vagaries of changing perception and values.”¹⁸

It is this embodied meaning which society gives to certain forms or combination of forms that creates another problem for society. “The successful monument has offspring”¹⁹ Though this could be an appropriate and natural conclusion, the monument often becomes a

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¹⁶ Gass, p. 138
¹⁷ Gavin Stamp, Silent Cities.
¹⁹ Gass, p. 137
logo and a symbol for a variety of causes. It encourages imitators which attempt to gain significance through association (literally and subliminally). It is through such proliferation of new and copied forms that a devaluation of meaning can begin to take place. Institutions which rely on imitation may fail at achieving a monumentality they had hoped to achieve, because the proliferation of certain forms will inevitably lead to the dilution of meaning and formal power. True monumentality takes an enormous effort to achieve and demands exacting tolls on those who attempt to achieve it.

What control does the architect have over the role of 'his' monument and its place in society? Some seek for an architect's role to become that of an inquisitor which can only begin to ask relevant questions of what is this institution, what does it strive to become. Creating a sounding board which is able to reflect may be one attempt to determine reality. Is the emotive power of architecture to ask questions necessarily any more controllable or less oppressive than architecture's ability to define institutions?

Building a Twentieth Century Monument

If we have established the need for buildings and memorials to have qualities of monumentality, how does one then begin to define the institution or collective force which desires expression in an ever diverse society. Today's cultures and societies may no longer have clean boundaries or share obvious concerns. Modernism's global architectural plan holds little hope of achieving its goal. In its failing we learned many things and we witnessed many of its successes. The individual (who was supposed to prosper in the projects of modernism) and those collectives that make up society have not been served. Of course there is and will always be a voice of "another" who desires self-expression, but the individual desire for a community never disappears. By looking at a few projects I believe we can see this struggle taking place, illustrating the problems which now face monumentality, the potential for inclusive expression, and the need for monuments in today's society.

As the twentieth century progressed it become increasingly difficult for
Americans to understand which values they were attempting to preserve with each new military encounter. This in turn made it harder for the government or its citizens to justify the cost of achieving the ‘prize’. The challenge of commemorating many of those ‘conflicts’ was now in the process of being addressed.

In July of 1981 the jury of the Vietnam Memorial Design Competition sponsored by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) announced the winner of its design competition.\textsuperscript{20} Though many saw this as a climactic step nearing the end of an arduous journey, it was only the beginning of the life for this new monument. In the history of this memorial we can find most of the factors and issues which have faced the twentieth century memorial or monument, condensed and intensified into a period of ten years. This example is clearly a monument in the traditional sense, i.e., it serves no function other than to convey an event or person(s). But the issues that it raises and the ideas it attempts to convey are directly related to the basic issues which all buildings or memorials face when attempting to express or embody the ideas, aims, and character of a particular institution in this period.

The program drawn up by the VVMF and its appointed jury had two major objectives: “to honor the dead without commenting on the divisive subject of the Vietnam conflict, and to establish a relationship with other monuments on the Mall.”\textsuperscript{21} A challenge to express the loss and sacrifice of those who died, and in some way to situate the work both physically and spiritually into the site so that it makes a clear relationship to other memorials on the Mall. Most importantly it was not repress or express a specific judgment about the Vietnam experience. No one’s experience was the same, and no one experience or perspective would be deemed more real or authentic than any other.

The jury said of Maya Lin’s winning entry: “(it is) not a thing of joy,” but that it does express hope, because of its “open nature.” They thought that the memorial was not only site specific but was “very much a memorial of our own times, one that could not have

\textsuperscript{20} The first case study on the Vietnam Memorial will in large part come from a previous paper I wrote on Maya Lin’s design for the Memorial on the Mall.

been achieved in another time or place.”\textsuperscript{22} A memorial that is open and does not attempt to make ‘the’ definitive statement, yet is clearly expressive of its place in history and location on the Mall. It would seem by the jury’s comments that the memorial had achieved all those elusive qualities that the modern monument must contain — it was a success. Yet if a monument makes no comment or does not emphasize some interpretation and neglect others, its ‘open nature’ will lend itself to certain polemic interpretations by those who visit the site. It is as if we have said “for rent.” If the jury’s reading of the design was as truthful or as authentic as any, then so are other readings. This led to the inevitable polar interpretations of the Maya Lin’s competition entry. It was praised and accepted, while at the same time scored and rejected.

Robert Doubek, director of the VVMF felt that “the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is one of the few bright legacies of our country’s involvement in the Vietnam War.”\textsuperscript{23} But others felt like Representative Henry J. Hyde who wrote, “We feel this design makes a political statement of shame and dishonor. . . a new jury ought to be appointed. . . We share the view that this alleged memorial is a ‘black ditch that does not recognize or honor those who served.’”\textsuperscript{24} Thirty two of Representative Hyde’s colleagues sign this letter. Others felt like James Webb, a Vietnam veteran who called the design “a wailing wall for future anti-draft and anti-nuclear demonstrators”\textsuperscript{25} and went on to propose modifications which included making the wall white, having it be above ground, and adding a flag pole at the juncture of the two walls. Current (mid-1992) presidential hopeful Patrick Buchanan called it a ‘mockery.’ Another presidential hopeful, H. Ross Perot, petitioned Ronald Reagan personally to make alterations to this ‘shameful’ monument. In reply, Lin described the monument not as receding into the ground, but ‘growing out of the earth.’

Many who criticized the monument and then offered ‘solutions’ to improve the memorial generally shared two concerns. They expressed (1) a need to clearly justify the war experience and the ultimate price paid by over 58,000 young Americans, and (2) a

\textsuperscript{22} "On the Drawing Board," Architecture, July, 1981
\textsuperscript{23} Architecture, August, 1989
\textsuperscript{24} Architecture, February, 1982
\textsuperscript{25} Architecture, February, 1982
preference to use “clearly established” architectural symbols and vocabulary avoiding any interpretation that might possibly allow someone to condemn or make pointless the experience of the war. Representative Donald Bailey summed up this viewpoint when he wrote, “veterans are still tortured by the question of whether they fought for a proper reason.” He felt that “like it or not” the original memorial design projects a political message. “Please allow us to carry a message of honor as to why we fought... you had to have a reason why you told a kid to do something that might take his life.” He goes on to add that by adding the flag of the United States it would attest that those who fought had represented those values and ideals that make this country “what it is” today. What a wonderful paradox: there are few symbols which have become so loaded with often conflicting imagery as the American flag.

How much weight should be given to each interpretation? Should the designer’s interpretation, the veteran’s interpretation, and the public’s interpretations of the monument all be considered equally? Does the immense power of the memorial to provoke strong emotional reactions to a multiplicity of readings prove its appropriateness? Should not these varied readings be seen as the greatest endorsement the design could have received? Does the Vietnam Memorial become a living monument serving as a social contract that reminds ‘us’ of a collective obligation. Maya Lin’s design certainly seems to have the power to evoke memories of the experience and remind those of their feelings about their experience during the Vietnam War.

When we talked about a monument ‘for rent,’ the initial response was to consider the ability for groups or collectives to ‘adapt’ a monument over time as their institutions altered or ceased to exist. This can be broadened to include an understanding that some monuments (which appears to be the case for the Vietnam Memorial) may have multiple “tenants” at any particular moment in its history. The Vietnam Memorial could potentially serve to unite and restore different sections of the larger community (the American public) it strives to address. Rallying groups for a variety of competing causes, the true monument frequently has room for more “tenants.” Whether it will serve to unite and restore the
community it seeks to address still is being answered today.

This public controversy illustrates another dilemma of the modern monument. If multiple voices desire representation in a single monument, how actively can all those ‘voices’ participate in the creation of such a memorial. Historically most monuments, especially war memorials, have required official patronage due to their size and scope. The government or those in charge of the government would have had control over the final form, and therefore would inevitably favor the form which best expressed their own perspective of the war. The situation surrounding the Vietnam Memorial was somewhat different. Though the government would be a contributing player in the process, the VVMF, a private organization, would be given the final word in the decision making process. Secretary of the Interior James Watt only attempted to exert power over the process when he felt that the ‘people’s’ voice was not being heard. This was an unusual role for the government when contrasted with other monument projects on the Mall. Other groups associated with the Vietnam experience felt they had a right not only to express their views, but to see them implemented into the final form. Initially, since much of the money was to come from private funds, large contributors felt they too could speak with some authority.27

Through an arduous process, compromises were struck in the Vietnam Memorial. There was a desire on all sides of this multi-faceted debate to have everyone find the ‘final’ form of the memorial appropriate and meaningful. The compromises included the addition of a US flag and a nearby statue of three combat soldiers. The most controversial issue surrounding these elements was not in their addition per se, but in their placement on the site. Their placement was critical, needing to be part of the experience of visiting the memorial, but not detracting from the integrity of Maya Lin’s design.

Robert Doubek argued that one of the keys to this Memorial is in its “equalizing and unifying effect, honoring all veterans regardless of rank, service branch, military occupation, race, creed, or sex.” Everyone equal, all sacrifices the same! Ultimately it was

27 H. Ross Perot was a major force, financially and well as politically, until he withdrew in disgust at the choice of Maya Lin’s competition winning entry.
only through the authority exerted by the VVMF that the memorial design was left intact and that this monument of national significance survived. Gavin Stamp wrote “equality in death, like equality in life, (can) only be achieved by the exercise of power”28. The truth which resonates through this statement will certainly make for one of the ironies that contemporary society must grapple with in its search for equity and understanding among people.

Another important issue that can again be illustrated by the Vietnam Memorial experience is the concept of “renters” or “subletters”. Which raises the issue of static versus fluid state in both the physical form and symbolic interpretation of a monument. For the Vietnam Memorial the many combinations of these viewpoints have already been expressed. Is such a ‘national’ memorial, or a work of monumentality, ever finished? Should its physical form be altered to reflect the collective’s or institution’s changing views on its role in society? Should its physical form be altered in order to keep interpretations from changing? Who, if anybody, has the right to decide when and if a monument is complete, and what, if anything, should be added to it? The answer may lie in Maya Lin’s solution, inherent in the form there are allowances for a changing variety of readings, today and tomorrow, regardless of the course American society chooses to follow. It does this without ever losing sight of the fact that 58,000 men and women died in the “American experience” in Vietnam. Names of individuals, a flag, and a statue have all been added to the monument without detracting from the work. When, if ever, does a monument become so sacred as not to be altered? This has yet to be answered by the Vietnam Memorial.

On a larger scale, the memorial still participates in the age old repression and expression of ideas that is criticized by those advocates of the memorial and its open nature. In order to achieve its success the memorial does repress interpretations of the Vietnam War. It gives no information or understanding about the impact on other nations or people this ‘incursion’ may have had. It is an American memorial to Americans, it talks about “our” loss, “our” sacrifice, it questions “our” involvement. This is needed for its success, and though one can argue that it speaks about the general horror and sacrifice that is war

28 Stamp, p. 11
and can thereby be understood by anyone who visits the memorial, it is distinctively an “American” memorial. The memorial lists the Americans who died during this period. It is not a place where ‘all’ who suffered in this war can feel a sense of special belonging. Time may change this aspect of the memorial. The institutions that build these monuments alter or cease to exist, and the monuments and buildings often allow the collective memory to suppress that which its finds uncomfortable or unproductive and to glorify favored qualities expressed in these structures. Adopting the building for their own purposes. Over time monuments often become icons unto themselves. Monuments can truly be endowed with meaning beyond their original setting or purpose.

The Astronauts Memorial at the Space Center in Florida is another project which has attained a degree of monumentality and can enrich our understanding of the need and effectiveness of monumentality in this century. Though again I have picked a memorial and not a building, I do so to avoid complex consideration of the programmatic functions of a variety of institutions, not from any lack of buildings which have achieved monumentality in this century. Later I will introduce the problem of a specific institution, the church, and will examine how the program and every day use of a building can aid in heightening the monumentality of the structure. The understanding of buildings and spaces is enriched at a variety of levels by the continuous use of such buildings. It is in this capacity that buildings can potentially hold richer opportunities than memorials to work and be understood at a variety of levels. The memorial often struggles with the way in which to get participation at a variety of levels. The placement of the Astronauts Memorial was positioned so that it functions in the larger context of the space center, and by its placement creates interaction with a variety of participants at a variety of levels.

The Astronauts’ Memorial, like the Vietnam Memorial, began as a design competition. The “major competition requirements were that the memorial identify all 14 astronauts who have perished to date in the space program, in a manner that expressed their aspirations as well as their sacrifices and that it allow for commemoration of astronauts who may die in future space efforts... establish proper dignity on the chosen site...
be) an effective symbol when seen by the anticipated 2.5 million visitors... and by the roughly 5000 employees who will pass by it everyday."^{29}

Again we have asked the architect to create an object which can work on a series of levels. The monument must identify those who have died in pursuit of space flight. It must express the desires, aims, and sacrifices of those involved with the space program to the broad variety of visitors, from the level of the astronaut to the foreign visitor unfamiliar with the space program. It must communicate to those who work at NASA about their 'social contract' they with the institution they serve. It must communicate with the everyday visitor, so that they can not only understand what price was paid, but at some level(s) understand what, why, and how these astronauts did what they did, and why others continue to follow in their footsteps. Though not its major intention, the monument's success at communicating with the visitor will eventually help determine whether there is continued support for the space program, for it is the public at large who will ultimately decide the fate of future space exploration. The pursuit of space takes an enormous collective effort in which everyone is asked to make sacrifices.

The Memorial is provoking, disturbing, and moving. "It is at once a paean to the power of our technology and an essay on its existential danger."^{30} Jeffrey Kipnis writes that "HHPJ's primary strategy to assert the status of intention and decidability in the face of the contemporary academy's bewitchment by undecidability."^{31} Kipnis continues to praise HHPJ's work, while criticizing the "arcane self-indulgences of Deconstruction and the other speculative architectures in its wake." For him this Memorial is a breath of fresh air. "Whereas some architects today see the task posed by undecidability to consist of relaxing the systems of repression to give greater play to the consequences of undecidability, HHPJ draws the opposite conclusion. The firm increases the repression aggressively to achieve meaning, however provisional that achievement may be."^{32}

Maya Lin & Wes Jones have achieved examples of monumentality in this century

^{30} Hogben, p. 79
^{31} Kipnis, p.79
^{32} Ibid., p.142
that should serve as sources of inspiration, if not guides, toward finding appropriate forms when beginning the process of expressing the essence of an institution. Much is asked of the modern monument by the institutions that build them, possibly more than ever before. This should only lead to stronger work if architects are willing to answer the challenge. The authentic monument should reveal "the profound new bond of form and content. It enriches social life and public space with symbolic form capable of lasting inspiration. It will serve as a repository of memories and an imaginative stimulus to new courses of action. In a sense it must be a microcosm of the city. Binding past patterns and present aspirations into a coherent and dynamic whole. The authentic civic monument takes on the flavor of a genuine collective expression."\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{33} Curtis, p. 85
The Church as an Institution

When we talk about architecture and its ability to embody the ideas of an institution, to remind us of our beliefs, to restore our faith in an institution, and to inspire future action there are several institutions which come to mind. The church, possibly more than any other social institution, can document a long, rich, and continuing struggle to define and express a collective spirit through its buildings. Much of the history of Western architecture is intrinsically linked to this search for appropriate form for ecclesiastical structures. The church at one time spoke to society with spiritual, moral, political, and social authority, and therefore its buildings became essential in any study of medieval or renaissance architecture. Today the church no longer plays all of these societal roles, but the church, as a community of believers, may be more desiring than ever of a physical expression of their faith.

Within Christianity, the ecclesiastical struggle to find the appropriate form for buildings is not based on Christ's teaching. The church building is not a ordinance from God. The history of ecclesiastical buildings, from Solomon's Temple to the Crystal Cathedral, is a history of the human struggle to identify their relationships to God, within the faith community, and to society. These works collectively form a history of the search to find the 'perfect form.' Of course this is an impossible goal as the perfect form cannot exist, because the church is a living organism which is constantly changing its concept of worship. This dynamic, with the eternal constant that is faith in Christ, makes the church a difficult and exacting challenge for the community and architect who set out to design and build such an edifice. Edward Norman describes ecclesiastical architecture in this way.

"'The church' is a condition of things, not a building. To examine a church structure . . . is to contemplate the material evidence of a reality which is invisibly present. It is to see the imperfect description of faith, not its substance. But it is, nevertheless, to sense something of the spiritual splendor which the
world anticipates and which, Christians believe, eternity delivers.\textsuperscript{34}

The history of ecclesiastical architecture is a long and well documented one. Throughout history the church building has been perceived to play a variety of roles and is called upon today to fulfill more. This essay will not attempt to summarize the vast and complex history of church architecture, but will instead refer to this history as it will help illustrate were Christians find themselves today and where they may seek answers in their search for appropriate forms for their houses of worship. Those broad concepts and specific ideas which have 'traveled through time' to have a profound impact on the way we perceive Protestant church architecture today need to be understood. Many ideas that have not traveled through time, but could be of service will also need to be illustrated.\textsuperscript{35}

Typically upon creation of a new institution one of the first desires of the community is to announce it presence. This desire for expression often takes form in the creation of a physical symbol or icon which can embody and portray their ideas, so that they can rally around this symbol and be identified by others. For the early Christians this was not the case. The earliest Christian congregations did not raise houses of worship and did not establish building forms. That they sought safety from persecution in the catacombs, and though church building attempts would have likely increased visibility and opposition, these do not completely explain why these early Christians did not attempt to build new 'temples' for their community. The early church felt no urgent need for the temple. The temple's sacred areas and objects where God was present (e.g., Temple of Solomon, Ark of the Covenant) had been nullified by the coming of Christ. The Apostle Luke, writing about 90 A.D. wrote;

"The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives all men life and breath and everything."\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{34} Edward Norman, \textit{The House of God: Church Architecture, Style, and History} (Thames and Hudson, 1990)

\textsuperscript{35} When illustrations can be drawn from the Baptist tradition, I will attempt to do so. The design portion of this thesis is a seminar for the Alliance of Baptists.

\textsuperscript{36} Acts 17:24-25, \textit{The Holy Bible (Revised Standard Version)}, (Harper Study Bible edited. by Harold Lindsell, Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1971)
The early church perceived itself as a community of believers that gathered to share the Word and to worship together. The aura of sacredness came from the meeting together of individuals, not from the structure in which they gathered. Even though Christ did not give specific ideas on the type of structure the community should come together in, Christ did give instruction to his disciples conduct of worship and what type of rituals would be effective in the remembrance and continual reaffirmation of their beliefs. The early church began to establish such ritual acts of remembrance, but they were performed wherever the community of believers gathered. Christ had taught them; “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

It was in the fourth century B.C. that Constantine, the Roman Emperor, accepted Christianity. The church moved out of the catacombs and into the basilicas. This freedom from need for a special place of worship is probably best illustrated by the ease with which the early church simply moved into and used the basilicas of their Roman persecutors. As the church became more formally organized and more ‘officially’ established a tradition of church architecture began. The early churches quickly became related to the society at large, and society demanded from the church some form of physical identification.

The place of worship gained in significance, and over the centuries the veneration of specific sites (particularly those associated with the life of Christ), the indebtedness of a tradition, and the cumulating symbolism of Christian life began to make the buildings which believers gathered more and more important. At the same time a continuous shifting of the ideas and relationship within the church began to manifest itself in the physical structure of the church. The Gothic cathedrals of the Middle Ages represent for Christians, the high point in the importance of the building in Christian worship and life.

Important in the sense that the building for some literally held metaphysical powers, merging the angelic hosts of heaven with the human community. In 1130, upon the dedication of the new choir of Canterbury Cathedral the congregation sang: “Awesome is this place. Truly, this is the house of God and the gate of Heaven, and it will be called

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37 Matthew 18:20, RSV
38 Many early Christians believed that the return of the Savior was imminent and this may have lead to the feeling that building permanent new structures made little since.
the court of the Lord." The Gothic cathedral was not an expression of the two worlds, or the aspirations of the community but the actual attempt to merge the temporal and spiritual worlds. Often the cathedral has been called the Bible made of stone for the masses. They could not only see, touch, and read God's message in stone, but experience the divine presence while worshiping in this "House of God." Again it was the believers who desired this physical manifestation of the faith, not something that came explicitly from the teaching of Christ. Each historical period to follow would bring another wave of theological debate, which would constantly change the human perspective on the relationship between the community of believers and God. It would also challenge and question the role of the individual within the community of believers, which in turn, as one would expect, affect the plan of the church.

The church building often played, as it does today, a productive and even vital role in the life of the congregation and the formation of the community. It served to solidify the believers as a reminder of their mission. Today the church building is still needed to provide those qualities required by individuals for the physical expression of the collective in which they participate. It can remind members of their commitment, restore their faith, and serve as a bridge from the past into the future.

Today Protestants should probably be reminded of the understanding the early Christians had of the 'church' as a congregation of believers, not the structure in which they met. Throughout the history of church architecture there has been, at times, too much importance placed on the structure. Though it often plays a vital role, the building should not be the essence of the church.

"The building is neither essential nor determinative. Faithful and earnest witnessing lies at the core of Christian worship. Yet the arrangement of the place of worship is always tied up with this witness. The building of the sanctuary is one of those works by which the community makes a clear and visible expression of its witness before the eyes of all. The care devoted by the church in this edifice will express the faith which causes its creation."\footnote{Rudolf Schwartz, \textit{The Church Incarnate: The Sacred Function of Christian Architecture}, (Translated by Cynthia Harris, Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1958)}
Ecclesiastical architecture is by its nature called to something higher than bureaucratic functioning.

*Is the Church for Rent?*

The church building, unlike a memorial, has a program or function other than commemoration or glorification of some past event. The church building has everyday interaction at a variety of levels that the monument does not. Having a program or function is a rich opportunity to explore various levels of interaction and understanding of a building. This is not true of so many monuments without function, where it is often a more a controlled or contrived experience. Louis Kahn appreciated the discovering of the ‘will’ of the community by the layering of the experience. When talking about a chapel he wrote:

> “First you have a sanctuary and the sanctuary is for those who want to kneel. Around the sanctuary is an ambulatory, and the ambulatory is for those who are not sure but who want to be near. Outside is a court for those who want to feel the presence of the chapel. And the court has a wall. Those who pass the wall can just wink at it.”

Theologians like James F. White believe that though buildings evoke emotional responses, those whose first concern is the liturgical demands or the ‘work done in God’s service’ will be able to elicit desired emotions by their ability to facilitate the process of worshiping in a well organized worship center. There are problems with over emphasizing either approach as a sole method of design. It is in the interweaving of the emotive and liturgical demands that a highly personal statement can emerge.

It is possible to achieve a work perfectly suited for a specific community as it exists today, highly personal and unable to be “rented.” But don’t churches want to be “for rent?” Though they desire to express a very personal identity, the church is striving to be

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40Louis I. Kahn quote from John Lobell, *Between Silence and Light* (Shambhala, Boston, 1985) p. 66
inclusive as an institution. Attempting to always grow and include more and more individuals means a constant change in the identity mix of the community. How then does a highly personal building serve the congregation if it prevents or is a distraction from the calling of the church by its use of exclusionary language? A church must struggle with this issue as it evaluates its mission to the larger community.

_Ecclesiastical Work Today_

As students of architecture we are aware of the varied stylistic characteristics of each period of architecture. Most stylistic characteristics of churches have through time either defined or attempted to reflect the period in which they where built. Liturgical considerations which are not covered in most architectural surveys, have been a dominant force in many of those changes and should effect the criteria by which these churches are understood. A general lack of concern or unwillingness to question conventional ideas about liturgical architecture and its role in the worship and/or mission of the church is one of the problems facing churches today.

Throughout history the liturgical demands of the church have continued to alter the way in which the church building evolved, so that the church building has reflected the changing theology of the church through much of its history. What makes it perplexing is to find that so many denominations representing so many churches and individuals in this "synthetic of centuries," have seemingly agreed on two types of appropriate liturgical arrangements. Have we finally found THE appropriate forms for Christian worship. Two "types" have come to dominate Protestant church building in the United States to the point of becoming almost "standard patterns." How did American Protestants become so resolved in the "auditorium" and "divided chancel" plans. If we were to ask people whether the worship center should be brilliantly lit or dimly lit, should it be elaborate or simple in its decoration, should it be one of celebration or one of solitude we could not expect a consensus. Yet in the end most churches have come to use almost identical plans.

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The idea that most churches today are from two "standard patterns" is that of F. White. They will be referred to as the "auditorium" and the "divided chancel," this correlates to F. White's designation of "revival plan" and "divided chancel."
when building their churches. One can point to outstanding exceptions, and today we are seeing a great many churches awakening to this problem. The church's philosophy and theology is a process, not an absolute, yet the church's buildings have changed little or shown little diversity over the last one hundred years. By and large the Christian community builds very conventional spaces.

This can lead to a church building no longer effectively participating in or with the mission of the church. Another potential danger is that the community can forget how and why the worship center is laid out the way it is, and thus it becomes another missed opportunity. Often the arrangement of the plan for liturgical centers does not reflect the church's understanding of their faith. I have mentioned the 'two' types of church plans that have become patterns. The revival or auditorium plan has become the plan for a majority of the Baptist churches built in this century. Though there are several rich and important aspects of this plan that have importance to many churches, including Baptist, this type of layout clearly has its drawbacks. What is unfortunate about this general plan is that the congregation tends to become an audience. Worship is something done for them or to them by those who participate in front of them. Frequently the term applied to the sanctuary or worship center is the auditorium, which tends to emphasize an assembly place for listening. The plan is often very similar to that of a civic auditorium, complete with a concert type 'stage,' and individual seats which direct your view forward, reinforcing the idea of non-participative spectator.

The conviction of a mutually shared responsibility was one of the foundations of the early Protestant church, yet today this is not reflected by the plan of many churches. There is little encouragement by the physical building for members to interact or participate in the service. The churches liturgical centers have little or no space allocated for the congregation to gather. The pulpit, altar table, baptistery, and even processional space are often arranged on this "concert stage." At times the liturgical center on the 'stage' contains the only overtly religious decoration in the entire building.

A religious community is asking to fail if it only perceives the need for the emotive
quality in architecture. There is a constant tug-of-war in priorities between the emotive and liturgical demands of the church that needs to be addressed.\textsuperscript{43} This concern for the emotive experience can at times lead to an orientation of the worship service more toward individual emotional need than divine worship. This idea peaked in the nineteenth century revivals which sweep across America and is evident today in the auditorium plan of these churches. James F. White feels that the revivals were based on performance to enhance a emotional climax; the revival not a community of believers celebrating together and participating in the spreading of the word, but of participant and spectator.

Some might feel that this is a gross over simplification, or misunderstanding of the Protestant worship service. Certainly congregations participate in singing of hymns during the service, and there are responsive readings, and the partaking of communion. A Protestant church could not function, even on the everyday level, without the support and participation of its lay members. Yet these activities, particularly during the worship service, are typically done without significant interaction. In many Protestant churches members don’t leave their seats to receive Communion\textsuperscript{49} If members of the church insist that a pastor’s sermons be theologically correct, why do they not demand the same of their church buildings and services?

The other so called “pattern” referred to is the divided chancel. Here the congregational area, as in the auditorium, is typically a long rectangular nave with the pulpit and lectern at one end separating the nave from the choir, the altar, and the baptistery or baptismal font. Again this plan reinforces the idea of participant and spectator, or giver and taker. Actually it reflects an even greater hierarchy of participation.\textsuperscript{44} This current situation has, I believe, occurred not out of strong conviction but from the lack of awareness of the potential for architectural change to be a productive and growing experience for the church. It is often without serious consideration that these patterns

\textsuperscript{43}This argument concerning emotive and liturgical architecture is indebted to ideas put forth by James F. Whites in \textit{Protestant Worship and Church Architecture.}

\textsuperscript{49}Communion is a term that is used interchangeable with Lord’s Supper or the Eucharist, depending on the congregation.

\textsuperscript{44}Since this plan has not been adopted by many Baptist churches, it will not be analyzed in further detail.
repeat.

The issue of "religious decoration," is often a source of controversy, especially among Baptists. For many Baptists there is a strong desire for the church building to somehow embody the idea of "the poverty of wealth and the wealth of poverty." Churches are frequently caught between glorifying God and celebrating the calling of the church, without losing the message that they are attempting to deliver.

The current situation represents a great potential for growth in the church and its architecture. The church is a community which, by its own nature, needs constant reevaluation and new forms of expression. There has been no extensive consideration of church building in American by Protestants this century that has been manifested in built form, there is a strong and growing body of works in the last fifty years which could point the way for future church architecture. There have been bold and dramatic attempts, yet none have considerably changed or altered the church typography. This may be because they are not "for rent." The architects and the community may have achieved personal statements which because of their statement and organization of liturgical needs are highly personal and not easily adopted. Though we can find many of these examples in the United States and Western Europe, it is in the developing world and other nations like Japan which are now experience a new growth of Christianity that we find a true wealth of exploration. Why is this so?

*The Opportunity for Church Growth*

A new building represents an incredible opportunity for the church to assess itself. The new building if it is to embody the spirit of the church must be defined first by the members themselves. This task will require the congregation to work together, exploring current beliefs and practices. This process can renew and reinforce a commitment to the community on the part of the individual, and can also renew and reinforce the commitment of the community to its calling. The building process requires not only for the church to define its purpose and nature, but the role and relative importance of pastoral preaching,

45 Luigi Nervi, "Architecture and Religion: Theology of Form," *Domus* no. 718 (July/August 1990) p. 27
the proclamation of Scripture, sacramental observance, and the list could go on. The building venture can become a “occasion for revival rather the an exercise of the church’s self interest.” The building process can become a tool by which the work of the church is advanced. Churches are often criticized for becoming “building-centered,” but David Haney explains that though some churches may have at times been “building centered”, the work of the church has always been “building-related.” New buildings and new forms become one way of expressing the vitality of the congregation to the larger community it is trying to influence.

Since each denomination would answer these questions differently, I will again look at some specific churches which have begun their search for appropriate form to express their calling.

**The Search for Appropriate Form**

What has created such similarities in church architecture? I would argue what has happened in church architecture is the same that has happened in so much of monumental architecture this century. In need of stability and the desire for answers, the traditional forms of church building have become at times a crutch. This however does not mean that the use of traditional language is necessarily an unproductive or inferior way of producing church architecture if it is intelligently dealt with. “Working in a tradition is, I believe, essential to the making of places,” Imitation can led to new “originals,” if it is critical, selective, and inventive; not a mechanical and literal replication of an original. Typology, serving as a frame within which change can operate, leads to new and exciting forms. Type then serves as a way in which we can understand and communicate ideas. Alan Colquhoun “has suggested that the possibility of real communication between architecture and society can not necessarily be precluded by the idea of type. Indeed, a certain level of reality - which is necessary if communication is desired - is centrally concerned with types, because it is through the concept of type that the process of communication is made

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because it is through the concept of type that the process of communication is made possible."  

Institutions which rely too heavily on the established forms or 'types' can face many traps. Working within an established tradition or type “one can easily be seduced into believing that because traditional architectural language continues to have meaning, the traditional culture in which it began also continues to exist, or more naively, can possibly be revived.”  

If the new work fails to add to or enrich our understanding of the type, it will tend to devalue the type. Creating a ‘trivialization of meaning’ of ‘kitsch objects’ which become ‘dead metaphors’  

Within an existing language of architecture there is great latitude for manipulation and inventive play with forms.

The use of type to attempt to express new ideas or recreate old ones can be illustrated in the diverse works of the “National” and “Crystal” Cathedrals. Both buildings are major works of architecture which attempt to address and unite multiple communities from not only this country but the world at large. The choices made and paths followed are vastly different from one another, while at the same time they share similarities in their faith in architecture’s power to communicate ideas. Both the propositions and the ideas which created them hold the potential to create a rich and varied architectural statement. It should be noted that in the end, each of these churches used one of the established ‘types’ of floor plans outlined earlier.

The Cathedral Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, know as the Washington Cathedral, makes obvious its indebtedness to the past. Leonard Carmichael writes that this is the “rise of a great and true Gothic Cathedral.” He is careful to make it clear that ‘this massive church in no slavish copy of any other cathedral, old or new. It is a novel, emergent creation of the active religious faith of our age.”  

He goes on to write about the genius of the American architects who worked on the project and the modern technology that was used in its construction techniques. When explaining why it so obviously draws

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49 Stern, p. 23
50 The terms “trivialization of meaning, kitsch objects, and dead metaphors” come from Alan Colquhoun, “Form & Figure,” Oppositions 12. (Rizzoli, New York, 1978)
from the Gothic tradition he quotes Bernard Berenson: "There is, in fact, a relative absolute in art, which is determined by our psycho-physiological condition and our mental preparation," or man’s conservative and "inborn anatomical, physiological, and psychological characteristics" create a situation that allows, some forms or traditions, once they are discovered, to remain fixed or lack need of change. If classical music written several hundred years ago can still move us when played today, why can’t architecture still inspire awe and reverence several hundred years later?51 Within the ‘fixed canons’ of the Gothic style the Cathedral is a work of 'profound originality.' In the end, Leonard Carmichael, wants us to remember that the Gothic cathedral of the middle ages was not an invention, but a discovery which came from a process of trial and error, which then lead to the best way to express the religious "sentiments and particular aspects of Christian idealism." The Washington Cathedral is a progression in this process of expression. Are the 'sentiment and particular aspects of Christian idealism' fixed or are they too under a constant process of trial and error. Does change in the Christian perspective require shifts in the physical expression of Christian faith?

Certainly Robert Schuller and the members of the Cedar Grove Community Church believed that new types of expression are needed for the church today. In 1978 Robert Schuller approached Philip Johnson to design a new sanctuary for his church. "It was to be inspiring, soothing, and was to bond the experience of religion with the experience of nature.” The Crystal Cathedral was given its name from the glass which covers all the surface area and reflects all but eight percent of the sun rays. The Crystal Cathedral does not rely on a tradition symbolic language for meaning as does the Washington Cathedral. The lack of religious symbols or explicit religious reference on the exterior is uncommon for such large ecclesiastical works. The plan of the sanctuary, which gives form to the exterior of the building, is a star.

A fascinating personal detail which can be found in this cathedral are the huge "Cape Canaveral” doors. Schuller, an evangelist who rose from preaching on the roof of

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51 It is interesting that Carmichael does not clarify his point. Is he saying that the medieval cathedrals can still move us, or is he trying to say a copy of the original has the same effect as the original.
the snack bar at a drive-in movie lot, has not forgotten those roots. Schuller has included into the design of the worship center, huge doors which swing open and allow him to address, both the congregation inside, as well as those outside in their cars listening to him on their radios. Schuller and Johnson have attempted to create, from traditional forms and the use of new technology, a new expression of faith.

A more critical look at these two projects begins to illustrate how they have confronted the issues institutions face when addressing the problem of the modern monument. It seems natural that these vastly different missions have found contrasting forms, and it seems an appropriate conclusion that philosophy and form can be reflected in the architecture of every institution. The success each has had in achieving its goal is not to be answered here, but only to question whether or not they have attempted to address the issues raised.

When one refers to monuments which are “for rent,” two interpretations need to be addressed. One being that multiple groups or collectives could use a single monument to represent their views or ideals at the same time. The other being after a particular institution or community no longer exists or inhabits a particular structure another institution could adapt to it. Over time a entirely new understanding and interpretation of the monument would be understood. The Washington Cathedral when searching for an appropriate expression, desired that their monument be for rent. They hoped to attain a place of worship were all who visited, from all walks of faith and from all around the world, would be comfortable. Though the cathedral is associated with a particular denomination, the idea behind the building of this church was to reach out and connect to all believers in the global community of Christian faith. That anyone who visits would feel moved when within the confines of these walls. It is interesting that they believed that Gothic canons more than any other ecclesiastical work before or since has achieved such a level of universal understanding.

Narration which has been a controversial issue of monumentality in this century, brings up another difference between the churches. Who speaks for the collective, and
how did the community attempt to make a collective statement. In the case of the Crystal Cathedral it is interesting to note the pronouns Dr. Schuller uses to describe ‘his’ church. He writes about ‘his’ desire and ‘his’ vision for the church building. He never refers to the congregation’s or the denomination’s desire or vision for the building. It is not clear what role, besides financial, the congregation played in the design discussion or in any reevaluation of the church’s mission.

As one might predict, the plan of the church is an auditorium. The stage not only allowing the pastor to address his flock in the sanctuary, but to address those who are still in their cars. Schuller is a television evangelist. Most of his support comes from people who have never met him or visited his church. Johnson’s design must have been effected by the demands that television viewing placed on the architecture. Johnson’s design certainly allowed the church to be experienced at a variety of levels. Can one assume Kahn never envisioned this type of “experiencing” when he wrote about the church. By allowing a variety of experiencing, does the church risk diluting its message or purpose. If the message is about engagement and evangelical work, is it served by the community worshiping in their individual cars or living rooms. Another step which seems to embed the idea of spectator and performer is the individual seating present at the Crystal Cathedral. Gone is the pew or bench which talked in some way about a communal setting, replaced by an compartmental seating arrangement. Though ‘his’ building speaks of a new and enlightened approach, the philosophy and the ideas which created the cathedral are of an earlier period. How ironic that those who strive so hard to be ‘of our time’ in matters of philosophy build a Gothic cathedral, while those who hold a more ‘traditional’ view of religion and the role of its leaders build such a ‘modern’ building. They rely on the past and desire to partake in the present, but do so in very different ways. Both have a spirit and expression that does say something about the community that built them, more so than much architecture of our time.

They are expressions of the church “community” today, tomorrow society and the community may give the buildings new meaning. In the end Rudolf Schwartz may have
understood it best when he wrote:

“No, in the great and real sense there is indeed little purpose for by ourselves we can build no churches; that God must do. But far beneath the exalted realm of true architecture lies the other area... temporary structures... Such emergency buildings are the only possible accomplishments of men before God, waiting rooms before his threshold. They confess to the infinite need and they wait until God himself transforms it. This is the honorable way to build Churches; before God begins his work.”

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Appendix I
The Southern Baptist Alliance

Finding the particular ecclesiastical institution or church organization which had a specific architectural need that might be appropriate for my thesis project presented itself in a very personal way. As a Baptist I am very aware of the cross roads the Southern Baptist denomination currently faces. Baptists make up the largest Protestant denominational grouping in America, with some 40 million members that are aligned with some 24 national conventions or alliances. By far the largest and most influential of these is the Southern Baptist Convention with over 14 million members. During the previous decade a bitter fight for the control of the Convention between conservatives and moderates has caused a split in the denomination. This battle has waged over the basic core of traditional Baptist beliefs, with each side fearing a loss would mean an end to what they cherish most within the Baptist faith. This battle reached its climax in 1987 at the annual convention in Dallas with the conservatives effectively taking control of the national convention. Moderates were greatly concerned by the perceived loss of the integrity and responsibility of the individual on matters of faith and the potential loss of autonomy at all levels of the church structure. They perceived this an unacceptable shift in traditional Baptist thinking.

A vehicle in which moderate Baptist could have a voice was seen as imperative among many moderates. The Southern Baptist Alliance\(^1\) was formed in February of 1987 to be such a voice. Initially a voice working within the denomination, to preserve and fund specific programs, the Alliance soon found itself as an independent organization working to bridge together various Baptist institutions. They adapted a Covenant with seven major points:

"In a time when historic Baptist principles, freedoms, and traditions need a clear voice, and in our personal and corporate response to the call of God in Jesus Christ to be disciples and servants in the world, we commit ourselves to:

\(^1\) The Southern Baptist Alliance only recently renamed the Alliance of Baptists."
. . . the freedom of the individual. . . the freedom of the local church. . . the larger body of Jesus Christ. . . the servant role of leadership. . . theological education in congregations, colleges and seminaries characterized by reverence for biblical authority and respect for open inquiry and responsible scholarship; . . . the proclamation of the Good News. . . a free church in a free state.”

“The Alliance of Baptists is an alliance of individuals and churches dedicated to the preservation of historic Baptist principles, freedoms, and traditions, and to the expression of our ministry and mission through cooperative relationships with other Baptist bodies and the larger Christian community.”

A particular need created by the decade long battle between conservatives and moderates was the freedom of theological education within the denomination and the need for a new center of learning. Though in its covenant it clearly speaks about education in terms of congregations and colleges as well as seminaries, the idea of a new seminary which would encourage collateral learning was of particular importance in the minds of many who formed and supported the Alliance since its beginning in 1987. A new seminary would also allow the Alliance of Baptist a physical presence. Here was a chance for architecture to participate and add to the life and mission of the seminary and the Alliance as a whole. It would also serve as a place to test my thesis.

The Alliance of Baptists will call upon the architecture of its seminary to embody the mission of the Alliance. For Baptists and seminarians the architecture should not serve to consecrate or commemorate, but to remind those who are committed to the institution of the obligation to continue the struggle of those who have gone before and are yet to come. The buildings which make up the seminary should reflect the ideals, aims, and actions of the institution, and solidify those it addresses by serving as a constant reminder of both the historical tradition in which the seminary was founded and the future aspirations of those who built it. It should also address those who don’t use the seminary and be able to convey to them the essential ideas of the institution. This being the case as an ecclesiastical
work, it should be a clear and visible symbol of the faith which caused its creation. As a seminary it must reflect its commitment to integrate the community of faith with the community of learning. As a Baptist institution, it needs to serve as a stimulus for reconciliation and change. It is vital that the Seminary’s architecture allows for a rich variety of interaction.
Appendix II
The Site

The site I have chosen is on the campus of the University of Richmond in Richmond, Virginia. In picking the site I allowed both personal preference and institutional reality to play a role. In the last few years the Alliance of Baptists has looked at a variety of sites in and around Richmond. Last year, with cooperation of other Baptist organizations, the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond was opened. They located themselves in temporary quarters at Union Theological Seminary (Presbyterian Church of the USA.) in Richmond. This location is not intended as a permanent home, and their search for a suitable permanent site continues.

The University of Richmond seems a natural location for this seminary. In 1830 the Virginia Baptist Education Society, formed for the improvement of the ministry, set forth to open the Virginia Baptist Seminary. As the seminary struggled to mature, there was an ever increasing awareness of those involved with its operation that there was a real need for better pre-seminary training among those students entering the theological studies. In 1840 the Virginia Baptist Education Society applied and received a charter for a four year undergraduate institution, and Richmond College was founded. Due to the financial burden on Virginia Baptists running both a college and a seminary, the seminary ceased to exist. In the 150 years since these events the Richmond College has changed campuses, changed names, grow in size and importance, but has always had and continues to maintain a strong relationship with Virginia Baptists. The seminary presents an opportunity to enrich the life of both the denomination and the university, helping each institution to mature and grow, while strengthening a relationship which is valued by both institutions.

The campus is located within the city limits, several miles west of the downtown commercial district. The sites undulating terrain, dense vegetation, and scenic lake serve to place this campus in a beautiful natural setting. The original campus plan was designed by Cram and Ferguson in 1914, shortly after such projects as the Rice Institute and the United
States Military Academy, had attempted to take advantage of 'rugged' terrain. Though the University has not felt obligated to rigorously follow all aspects of the master plan, they have stuck to the architectural style with some vigor. There are only just a few exceptions to the collegiate Gothic found across the campus. The proposed specific placement of the programmatic elements of the seminary were chosen only after I was able to clearly define objectives and develop a series of schemes which offer a wide range of possibilities.
Appendix III
Developing the Design

The were four relationships that I have attempted to set up to communicate those basic ideals deemed to define this institution. The first relationship or dialogue was that of the seminary itself. It needed to have an identity of its own, one separate from the university. It was important to have the buildings which made up the seminary to have a cohesiveness which united them as a group. The second relationship was that which would show the community of faith and the community of learning merging. Emphasizing that the knowledge of one only serves to increase and reinforce the understanding of the other. Though the seminary is a distinct institution, it also wants to be an active member of the greater academic community. The third important relationship was the ability to refer to the past, state where the institution finds itself today, and give a vision for the future. Finally the fourth important relationship which needed to be expressed was that of the seminary and nature. Man's creation vs. God's, a chance to comment on mans role and place in relationship to God. The seminary should emphasize the idea that God, not man, should be the focal point of the seminary.

That the seminary clearly established itself as a separate institution within in a larger institution of learning was achieved by several architectural moves: first in siting, then in the development of a unique architectural language, and finally in the way in which the buildings related to landscape and the larger built university. The project offered me an opportunity to reevaluate the way in which the existing buildings on campus have related to the landscape and the way in which they interact with one another, and as a larger system of buildings. I saw an opportunity to defer to the landscape unlike the other buildings on campus. Instead of building a cloistered monastery, quad, or buildings which where self-referential, there was a opportunity to allow the buildings to defer to each other and then to the landscape. The buildings begin to wrap around the hill, at the same time climbing toward and accentuating the top of the hill. Tying the buildings together with a datum line which would be evident across all the buildings and then by manipulating a series of simple
volumes, I could begin to create a rich variety of spaces which become increasingly public, or private, as the programmatic elements demanded (Fig. 3).

The need to integrate the community of faith and the community of learning was achieved by the dialogue set up between the chapel and the library (Fig. 4). The chapel was ‘removed’ from the seminary, and denied the more obvious or expected placement on the top of the hill or as the next in the sequences of buildings wrapping the hill. I decided to place the chapel across the lake. The chapel’s tower can be seen from the top of the hill as well as when occupying the reading rooms of the library. Its placement would serve as a constant reminder of the seminary’s servant mission to Baptists and the church’s call to witness to the world. The chapel by its placement becomes a gift to the university at large to be used by students for worship, meditation, and refuge.

The programmatic elements of the library are split into two buildings which fall on either side of the axis which is formed by the relationship of chapel tower to the top of the hill. Then the library not only carries a dialogue between the chapel and the library, but also heightens the relationship between the chapel and the top of the hill. That nothing is at the top of the hill, yet all the buildings are orientated to it, creates a extremely powerful space in which nature (God’s creation), not man is at the center (Fig. 5). Upon entering the chapel the only view one has is directed back across the lake to the top of the hill. The participant is then informed about the relationship between the chapel and the seminary, and between the chapel and the top of the hill.

The final important relationship is that between the past, present, and future of the church. This dialogue is achieved by the relationship between the University’s existing sanctuary and the seminary’s new chapel (Fig. 6). They form a study in contrast, yet one does not attempt to negate the other. The are contrasted by placement, scale, material, and spatial experience. The old church is a permanent structure which attempts to glorify the creator through the achievements of the community itself. It emphasizes the sacraments, and is design for the ceremonies of worship. The existing sanctuary’s placement atop a small hill, viewed picturesquely from afar, separates itself from the everyday activities of the campus, which is in direct contrast to the new chapel. (It should be noted that since the
original sanctuary was built the campus has grow tremendously and it is no longer as isolated as it was originally.) The chapel’s placement puts it at the heart of campus life. It stresses the individual and communal worship over the ceremonial. The materials are temporary, aware of the church’s changing nature. Placement of the chapel in the water, its intricate detailing to capture reflective light, and the general care involved in its construction clearly state the love and devotion in its creation.

It is hoped that these four relationships begin to inform the participant about the institution. From the beginning of the design process there has been an awareness of how people would interact with the seminary. How different people interact and what understanding of the institution they take from that interaction became very important. One example is that of the two major circulation routes from one side of the lake to the other, one intersects the seminary at the axis set up by the chapel and the top of the hill right at the library’s plaza, emphasizing this area as a public space to be used by the larger community, emphasizing the integration of the seminary into the university community.
Appendix IV
The Documentation

Fig. 1 Master site plan
Figure 2 - Seminary site plan
Figure 3 - The seminary as an institution
Figure 4 - Merging the community of faith and the community of learning
Figure 5 - Acknowledging the past while looking to the future.
Figure 6 - Relationship between seminary and nature
Figure 9 - Site section (view from the lake)

Figure 10 - South elevation (view from lake)
Figure 13 - Seminary site/floor plan.
Figure 18 - Chapel: plan, section, and elevation
Figure 19 - Model of chapel/tower
Appendix V
The Final Review

The final review was held on December 4, 1992. The jury for the final review consisted of visiting critics Jeremy Dixon, Ed Jones, Marianne Thompson, William Cannady, Richard Ingersoll, and Peter Waldman, as well as my committee members Albert Pope, Mark Wamble, and Spencer Parsons. The criticism during the review covered a range of topics with which I had struggled this semester, as well as other issues which (though considered) I had not immersed myself. My overall judgment of the jury's assessment was positive, and I found the discussion helpful.

Much of the initial criticism came not about the premise of the thesis or the general siting of the seminary (areas I had hoped the discussion to center on), but in reference to the programing and specific circulation patterns within and between the buildings. Both Dixon and Jones were concerned initially with internal circulation more than larger site and programmatic moves. They believed that it was at this level that my larger moves could have been better informed. Much of this might be attributed to the level of detail displayed in the library and chapel drawings which was then not evident in the site drawings.

Discussion turned next to the articulation of the buildings which comprise the seminary. Dixon and Jones here again agreed on another point. They perceived the buildings primarily reacting to one another first and to the landscape second. They both expressed a preference for greater deference to nature and less to each other.

A series of short discussions then centered on the architectural vocabulary of the seminary. Jones felt the buildings were too similar and expressed a wish for greater play and a more diverse vocabulary. Dixon countered that the established vocabulary was pushed to far. He felt the introduction of the angular roofs on what was an orthogonal system was too diverse and that the design needed to be more rigorous. Though sympathetic to their desire for more integration of programmatic elements and for more attention to circulation, I did not share either concern on the chosen architectural
vocabulary. I believe that a rich variety of spaces where achieved (or are at least achievable) within the chosen vocabulary. That there is such a limited vocabulary allows the angular roofs to separate the library as a special element within the context of the seminary. The roofs are able to make several gestures and carry certain weight because they break from the orthogonal system that has been established. Their criticism on this point strengthens my conviction about this part of the seminary’s design.

The greatest diversity of options came during the discussion of the chapel. Opinions ranged from favorable to unconvinced about the effectiveness of the design. Ed Jones felt that I had made sacred the entire lake, and really appropriated far to much area for the seminary by its placement on the lake, yet Spencer Parsons felt that it was too small an element, he described it as “simply a toy” in the lake. He contrasted it in scale to the student union building, yet did not suggest that that scale would be appropriate. Somewhat confused as where to begin my defense, Albert Pope spoke for the first time. He initially described the chapel in terms of how it works spatially (which I had left out of my presentation), and then how and why he felt its positioning appropriate. It was at this point when the discussion became somewhat blurred, between the jurors attempting to hone their own definition of monumentality, to criticize the architecture displayed, and to understand what I was exploring in my project. Peter Waldman lightened the conversation by suggesting several fantastical ideas. One included celebrating the most important day of the Baptist calendar, the feast of St. John, “patron saint of the Baptists” (of course I made no attempt to correct Peter’s delusions of Baptist rituals), by building a new temporary chapel every year which would disappear after the celebration. Illustrating the details and taking more time to articulate how it functioned as a chapel might have considerably change the course of the discussion. Regardless of its appeal to me as a single architectural element, much of the criticism it terms of sitting and scale was persuasive.

Marianne Thompson was unquestionably the voice of clarity among the visiting critics. Though apologetic latter for speaking so little, she on several occasions articulated criticisms which brought the discussion back to the project and my original intentions. Afterwards she said that she had hope that the term monumentality would have dropped
from the discussion. She felt that the desire for collective expression is “pre-monumental” and by saying that I desire to redefine how we build monuments clouds my true intentions. It has been clear to me all semester that this dilemma lies at the core of my thesis. Not only must I define monumentality, but convince others to accept that definition and the role for monumentality I have chosen. As Mark Wamble interjected, collective expressions for institutions are possible and needed, but they must be achieved without the traditional methods of appropriation, and it is not clear as to whether this project achieved that end. Intensity of expression achieved not by scale or importance of the institution, but by the clarity of its architectural expression. At the core of this thesis (and my interest in architecture) is architecture’s ability to transcend function and express those intangible qualities of society’s institutions.