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The American Catholic Church in the contemporary urban realm

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The American Catholic Church in the Contemporary Urban Realm

by

Catherine M. Bird

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ABSTRACT

The American Catholic Church in the Contemporary Urban Realm

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The role of the Catholic Church as an institution in the city is one which has not been successfully exploited in this country. The transformation of the church after the Second Vatican Council relied on a direct relationship between functionalism in architecture and liturgical reform. This singular translation of liturgy into built form lead to an exclusive reading of the church as embodying only liturgy.

As the post-Vatican II church solely emphasized liturgy, it turned inward, away from its public identity. The post Vatican II church no longer participates in the public realm. The American Catholic church has been lost as public institution.

The relationship between the church and the city must be examined with respect to the condition of the post Vatican II church and the contemporary city.
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CHAPTER I: THE INSTITUTION

Vatican II: Architecture and Liturgy

The Catholic Church can be considered the archetypal institution. It has a strict centralized hierarchy, a written body of dogma, and a rigid theology practiced by hundreds of millions of communicants. Its history has been charted in written word since biblical times. In this century the identity and role of that institution were irrevocably altered. Industrial and post-Industrial society swept ahead while the Catholic Church remained an institution of the Dark Ages. In an effort to release itself from this medieval image and keep step with the rest of the world, the Church enacted reforms which changed the identity of the institution. These events initiated theological, ecclesial, social, and even architectural renovations. A brief history of the reforms will illustrate their impact on the architecture and urbanism of churches.

The reforms which had the greatest impact on the architecture of the church were the liturgical reforms. Liturgy refers to public worship. In the Catholic Church this means a collection of formularies for the conduct of the Divine Service. Peter Hammond's Liturgy and Architecture (1961, just prior to Vatican II) details the beginnings of the liturgical movement which culminated in the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. He notes that the liturgical reform movement began at a conference in Malines, Belgium in 1909 where a young Benedictine monk, Dom Lambert Beaudin, set forth
proposals during the section of the conference on art and archeology.\textsuperscript{1} His ideas provided grounds for reexamining Christian art and architecture.\textsuperscript{2}

Hammond is quick to point out that Dom Lambert Beaudin's address of 1909 corresponds in date to le Corbusier's \textit{Vers Une Architecture}. He also remarks that the foundation of the Bauhaus in 1907, the completion of Loos's house in Vienna of 1909, and Behren's Turbo Factory in Berlin of 1909 are contemporary to the address. He recognizes Auguste Perret's astonishing 1922 accomplishment at Le Raincy as opening a new chapter in ecclesiastical architecture. Yet he fails to link these events, liturgical and architectural, in any meaningful way.

Hammond also misses the connection between the liturgical and architectural movements of the time when he discusses Rudolph Schwartz. He credits Schwartz with commencing the modern church movement, but asserts that this movement was primarily concerned with functionalism. It is clear that Schwartz's vision proved more profound. Schwartz, a leading theorist, connected with the "Quickborn" wing of the Catholic youth movement in Germany, produced two pre-War churches at Aachen and Leversbach which truly reveal his ideals. Says Hammond of the Aachen church:

\begin{quote}
Schwartz takes for granted the three basic precepts of the modern movement - honesty of structural expression, honesty in the use of materials, and honesty in the expression of function. What he also does - and it is this above all that makes his first church such a landmark - is to embody in architectural forms of the most rigorous integrity a conception of the function of a church which is informed by a genuinely modern understanding of the \textit{ecclesia} and its liturgy... It was indeed a step forward in 1930, and it is sobering to reflect that, so far as church architecture in this country nearly thirty years later is
\end{quote}
concerned, the lesson embodied in Schwartz's fine church has still to be learned.3

Hammond also notes that during the 1930's the liturgical movement spread to Switzerland and Eastern Europe, and that during the German occupation, the movement took hold in France. Clearly, although not explicit in Hammond's work, there existed a direct link between the development of modernism and liturgical reform in Europe. It is no mere coincidence that the liturgical movement spread to Germany during the peak of the Bauhaus.

In his second work, Towards a Church Architecture (1962), Hammond produced a set of guidelines for church building, ubiquitously announcing the fate of modern church architecture:

For churchmen
i. Keep hammering away functional requirements being met.
ii. Try to make committees and architects scrutinize their proposals, so that even if they cannot invest every part of the building with meaning, in the deepest sense, they can at least eliminate the obviously meaningless.

and for architects
i. Remember that the most important is the 'general solution': that the formal organization should serve first that which is 'central to the problem', as Mies van der Rohe would say.
ii. That the great baroque churches are not all theatrical in the expressionist (or Gordon Craig) sense, but rather communicate their meaning primarily by space, and by absolute consistency of plastic language. And these tools are still available - in fact are the only tools of architecture.
iii. There is no reason why the technology and materials of churches should be in any way different from normal building, in fact they have to be the same (the ideation of the commonplace and so on).
In other words, we should begin heading towards rather plain brick boxes with no tricks.⁴

Hammond's reasoning is adequate, but his conclusion is not the only one to be drawn from these principles. Unfortunately, many architects of the Vatican II and post-Vatican II periods came to the same conclusion as Hammond, building the dumb, brick box.

Although not fully understood by Hammond, Schwartz's words certainly intimate a path for modern religious architecture. His work, The Church Incarnate (originally Vom Bau Der Kirsche, 1938), speaks in universal, theoretical terms about the embodiment of the Church through architecture. Schwartz's strength lies in his ability to discuss his subject in abstract terms, elevating it from a stylistic context.

He begins by explaining that in former times, the altar and eventually the congregation and house of gathering were called "Christ" or "Body of Christ". Schwartz claims this concept is difficult for modern man to take seriously, adding that it is a confusion of reality and image.⁵ He uses the "Body" as the foundation for his discourse on the church. To illustrate the reality of the "Body", he describes the tympanum carving of Strasbourg Cathedral. "What they show is not meant as a landscape of the soul nor as an artistic interpretation - it is meant to be genuine history."⁶

To fully comprehend this concept, Schwartz felt it is necessary to look at the art, teachings, and lives of the saints in Medieval times to understand what they meant by the "body". First, they took the body seriously. "They accepted it in a way which we are no longer capable of today. Even the comparison of the church building with the Lord's body would have been
unthinkable without this absolute earnestness about the body's structure. The human form was for them a representation of absolute form."

The body was not understood scientifically, life was God's gift. Man was made in his image. Second, "...the body which was seen with such realism was not a rigid pattern... Body was both given and ever effected anew... The body could fulfill everything and transform everything."  

Schwartz uses the body to mandate a retreat from the perils of history, from an ancient and no longer useful reality.

This, then is our task:
To build churches out of that reality which we experience and verify every day; to take this our own reality so seriously and to recognize it to be so holy that it may be able to enter in before God. To renew the old teachings concerning sacred work by trying to recognize the body, even as it is real to us today, as creature and as revelation, and by trying to render it so; to reinstitute the body in its dignity and to do our work so well that this body may prove to be 'sacred body.' And beyond all this to guard ourselves against repeating the old words when for us no living content is connected with them.

By using the examples of the hand and the eye, Schwartz proceeds to outline how the body can be realized.

Schwartz gives six abstract plans for the body in the ensuing chapters: sacred inwardness, the ring; sacred parting, the open ring; sacred journey, the chalice of light; sacred cast, the dark chalice; and sacred universe, the dome of light. "The plans are bound by a living bond. This bond is historical time... [The] seventh 'plan' is the composite form of the sacred history - within it the first six plans are only limb, period and phase... The whole form present at one time is once more like a tree, with its crown of
roots buried in the darkness, its trunk, and its crown of branches in the light... The building which summons all phases into structure at once, uniting time's entire flow within itself, is the cathedral of all times."¹⁰ Schwartz obviously considers more than a strictly functionalist approach in his writings. However, many interpret his work falsely as simply incorporating liturgy directly into church form.

Schwartz was the last significant voice heard before the Second Vatican Council was convened in October of 1962 by Pope John XXIII. Vatican II authorized the use of vernacular language in the Mass, increased participation of the laity, and emphasized unity among all Christians. Most of the documents of Vatican II did little to make explicit these changes in deeds. This is particularly true of architecture. The built environment was not directly addressed in the Council despite the obvious implications of these reforms.

A collection of essays on the church and liturgical reform appeared post Vatican II at the Liturgical Conference held in 1965. One of the more potent essays from this group comes from Edward Sovik, FAIA, a well-known church architect. He counsels against architects who try too hard to produce a work of art, but also that, "it is possible that we may become so concerned with the workings of the liturgy that we turn out churches which in terms of liturgical rationale are very good but have nothing else to commend them."¹¹ The section of the essay entitled "Reality" holds his most poignant insights. "We architects live like almost everyone else, behind masks, wavering from one direction to another, feeling our way in a game of blind-man's-bluff. Our passion for the real blows hot and cold, and
we are too often deflected or seduced away toward formulations which are a matrix of deceptions.\textsuperscript{12} He remarks that huge cathedrals don't need to be built, "and I think that in the past there have been many comparatively small churches which have been built in the cathedral image."\textsuperscript{13} Although his wish seems to be for the church to escape its extreme incarnation, he proceeds to argue for the link between church and liturgy. Liturgy, for him, constitutes the church. "It is also possible to say that architecture is itself liturgy"\textsuperscript{14}, and "that the building is in a sense rebuilt and therefore renewed as liturgy when the community gathers to use it and perceives in it the image of their corporate being."\textsuperscript{15} Consequently, Sovik simply reinforces the prevalent position.

It is interesting to note that the documents of Vatican II simply provide a tone and a theoretical structure from which more concrete reforms were enacted. The changes in the liturgy are mostly a result of the interpretations of the Catholic intelligentsia. Pastoral letters, ecumenical councils, and diocesan directives made manifest the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. Articles by Sovik and others also fall into this category. They all helped to create an architectural and liturgical discourse supported by various diocese and parishes. Two Bishop's Committee conferences, from 1978 and 1986 produced issues of \textit{Environment and Art in Catholic Worship}. They are essential addenda to the 1972 statement from the Bishop's Committee on Liturgy entitled, "Music in Catholic Worship". In essence all of these statements are reflections on the articles from the documents of Vatican II which briefly, and vaguely, discuss church art and architecture. These addenda attempt to define beauty in one or two
sentences and mandate its formulation. From Article 34 entitled, "Beautiful", "... it [the liturgy] cannot be satisfied with anything less than the beautiful in its environment and in all its artifacts, movements, and appeals to the senses... In a world dominated by science and technology, liturgy's quest for the beautiful is a particularly necessary contribution to full and balanced human life."16 These works cling to the events of Vatican II. "Adjusted in their mode of expression and conformed to liturgical requirements, they may be introduced into the sanctuary when they raise their mind to God" (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, article 62).17

Although architecture was not targeted by the Holy See as a means to reflect reform, European and American churches used architecture to exemplify change. Whether or not it was coincidence or contrivance, liturgical reformers, particularly in the United States, aligned themselves with the "modern movement" in architecture. The "form follows function" craze of the 1960's and 1970's in this country appears almost pre-packaged for those looking for some way to represent the modern Catholic Church. With liturgy as the overriding concern, the American church adopted a "functionalist" policy. In other words, the new and pared down liturgy would be reflected verbatim in the modern church building. Since most of the devotions, those represented by particular altars to different saints or to the Blessed Virgin, and Stations of the Cross, were de-emphasized if not completely abandoned, the church building truly became the physical representation of the liturgy.
Theologians held the popular conception that liturgical reform was the only worthwhile concern, resulting in its over-emphasis. The process of liturgical reform began in 1909, Vatican II and the previous conferences merely confirmationed of a spirit of reform already prevalent. After all, the rubrics of the Mass were changed nearly ten years prior to Vatican II. A misunderstanding of modern architecture as simply functional in nature, led to the inextricable linking of church building and liturgy. This functionalist proposal engendered a grave period for the church, following Vatican II.

Although never made explicit in either doctrine or directive, the understood and implemented tenet of the Catholic intelligentsia was Modernism. No one could possibly imagine the effect that this subliminal policy would have on church building. The entire complement of written material became a register for the debate on Modernism in the guise of liturgical reform. Initially no more than an irritant, written works were used as propaganda for the dominant voices on architecture in the Church. However, the long term effect was an architectural dialogue producing nothing more than a homogeneous synthesis of sanctioned voices.
Post-Vatican II: Andrew Greeley, S.J. and Faith and Form

In the post-Vatican II era, much of the dialogue on religious architecture diminished. Works about churches are primarily in the form of picture books rather than critical works. Examples of this are: The House of God, Religious Buildings, and New Churches, all of which are pictorial works with very little critical text. A journal called Faith and Form, published by a division of the AIA since 1968, provides the only forum in the United States for discourse on religious architecture. Conversely in Europe the review, L'Art Sacré, has operated as a force in religious architecture since the 1940's. It was in fact the editor of L'Art Sacré, Father Couturier, who was able to convince le Corbusier to undertake work on both the convent at La Tourette and Notre Dame du Haut at Ronchamps.18 Curiously, L'Art Sacré, so widely regarded as the forum on religious art and architecture in Europe, had little impact on the discourse in America.

On examination, the issues of Faith and Form could easily be mistaken for copies of Stone World magazine. This journal (F&F) which began as a sincere attempt to reconcile issues of change in the Church with building program and form degenerated into a magazine, vacillating somewhere between a beauty pageant for built works and a trade journal on the how-to's of building a church. The issues from the 1960's begin to ask pertinent questions, containing many articles on the church and modern society. Rudolf Schwartz reappears as a voice of hope in the January, 1969 issue. "Here we stand at the end of these thirty years, and we are grateful when we look back over this period... now much has returned; we have our
concepts again..."19 However, his insights lack the depth of his early critical thought. Karel L. Sijmons, an architect from the Netherlands, voices the first questions to begin the new dialogue. "People always think that they have an answer to all the questions which perplex a country, the answer must come from another part of the world. But now, all the problems all over the world are the same. And there are no solutions to our questions nowadays. With all these problems, and when nobody knows what to do with a church, how is an architect going to make a church?"20 His analysis stops there.

Rather oddly, it is the voice of an American photographer, Julius Shulman, who presents the most formidable voice of the early issues. "Perhaps the idiom of church design has been perverted through mistaken ideas... Perhaps my cynicism is a natural product of world events during the post-World War II decades. We have not had peace. Even in the church, we have had unrest - the antagonism between Protestants and Catholics in Ireland provides a vicious example."21 His final analysis provides a vivid picture of the time, in contrast to so many other isolated articles:

In other words, here is a world in which so little hope prevails that one wonders Where is God, and ergo Why Architecture? I sense futility in the path taken by many nations of the world. There are so many new churches and yet so many crimes and so many murders and so many divorces and so many broken homes and so many hippies! The latter the result of a disturbed and sick society in so many cases. And yet we continue to answer the problem by building new churches and new banks! How ironic that man has such magnificent technological ability to heal the body through the processes of advanced medicine and surgery; yet the writing of countless volumes on how to heal the mind has not so far generated any hope, at least none that I feel, that either tomorrow or the day after will begin the millennium when man will love man and not produce atomic bombs or jet fighter planes or exotic, multiple-headed nuclear weapons in the name of defense."22
The 1970's produced some discussion on the role of secular architecture in a non-secular world. Edward Sovik appears again to assert, "we can be free to build secular spaces, good and beautiful spaces to be sure, which can serve people in a variety of ways, fruitfully." But no where does he discuss the modern condition.

The 1980's yielded a concern for the fate of the church also, but nothing more than a concern. Sovik's 1988 article maintains, "A church is first of all a body of people, not a building, and the building ought to be an image or a mirror of the community it shelters." Sadly, Sovik's discussion became one that insisted on the beautiful in religious architecture, rather than one that emphasized architecture's interaction with the community.

The issues to date from the 1990's seem to highlight those churches reverting to vernacular or historical models. However a lengthy article from 1989 dedicated to Neutra's Garden Grove Church may signal a willingness to reexamine other means and methods of church building aside from the traditional. In addition, Tadao Ando won the INFRAA (Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art, and Architecture) award for his Church of the Light in Osaka. Most of the other INFRAA awards in past years have gone to suburban vernacular or historical revival churches. The dialogue in Faith and Form has still not reached an adequate level, but at least the work being published is not restricted to any single position on religious architecture.

Not only is it difficult to document the American Catholic Church's attitude towards architecture in the post-Vatican II period, but it is equally difficult to ascertain the position of the Church on issues affecting
architecture or planning. Father Andrew Greeley, a Jesuit priest who teaches at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., best represents the "post-modern" (if you will) or post-Vatican II church. He was a young priest just out of seminary during Vatican II and is the most vocal advocate for change in the American Church. He is deeply committed to the problems of the modern Catholic, particularly the contemporary urban and suburban environments. Greeley is prolific by any standards and has not let the hierarchy of the Church interfere in his quest for reform. He has been under threat of excommunication on several occasions, as the requests for his silence went unobserved. He can certainly be considered the quintessential post-modern; he writes theoretical works, teaches, preaches, appears on talk shows, and writes romance novels.

Examining Greeley's works, one sees a concern for the whole church. Although each of his books emphasize different topics, threads of his own particular dialogue are evident and consistent throughout. Greeley does not conceive of the church as an ideal or an institution to be abstracted from its surroundings. It is difficult to categorize Greeley because his concerns for the city are so evident. However, in this section he is useful to illustrate the condition of the contemporary Catholic Church in America.

In The Church and the Suburbs (1963), Greeley exhibits concern for the problems of the sprawl city in a discussion of what he calls the "super-city". The work takes on certain tones expected from the period. Vatican II had recently convened, and the United States itself was beginning to enter an era of increased social awareness. In general, this work smacks of being a
social manifesto, but is significant to the extent that Greeley addresses the problems of urbanism related to the church.

Even now we have huge metropolitan 'strips' stretching for hundreds of miles and containing tens of millions of residents. In a few decades, we are told, such strips will extend from Boston to Newport News to Toledo, from Milwaukee to Fort Wayne and from San Francisco to Tia Juana. The emergence of these gigantic super-cities, crazy quilt mixtures of city and suburbs, of slum and factory, ranch house and shopping plaza, expressway and skyscraper, is probably the most significant social [not to mention architectural] fact of our era and one which poses many problems for the Catholic Church.25

Greeley cites urban renewal, neighborhood conservation, and planning as the three most important considerations for the city. With respect to planning he comments:

Our ideas of what a city is are out of date, and so unfortunately is what passes for city government. A city is more than a set of boundaries... It is rather a gigantic region or cluster of cities, transcending county, state, diocesan and even in a few cases national boundaries... Within the super-city there are hundreds of jealous, suspicious and competing governments, each more interested in its own sovereignty than in the good of the metropolitan region as a whole.26

Both conditions Greeley describes sound remarkably like today's Houston. And most importantly, Greeley sees a role for the church in contributing solutions to the problems of the city. "To the extent that the work of Catholics in solving these problems is unselfish and disinterested, to that
extent the ultimate goals of the Mystical Body will be achieved in the super-
city."27

Greeley also considers such subjects as the effect of building
climatology on liturgical symbols. In other words, since one no longer
experience the year in the same way that a farmer would through the passing
of the seasons, can the symbols of the Pascal lamb or the blade of wheat
have any significance for us?28 Greeley also makes the unlikely
comparison between liturgy and mass culture, suggesting that each should be
modified by the presence of the other. Greeley concludes this chapter on the
suburban parish with two recommendations. He comments that one of the
objectives of the suburb is to bring "the country" into the city. In this case
he strongly suggests that liturgists study urban planning to better understand
their environment. Finally Greeley praises the "marriage of modern
architecture and liturgy" and advocates a continued interest in developing
their relationship.29

The Hesitant Pilgrim (1966) likewise reveals Greeley's devotion to the
subject of the city. In a section entitled "The Unsecular City" Greeley
describes in no uncertain terms the complexities of the modern city. "The
city is a dynamic balance of the anonymous and the tribal, the sacred and the
profane, the secular and the unsecular, the rational and the traditional-and
the balance does not seem to be a very precarious one."30 Although Greeley
mostly considers himself a sociologist, he appears to respond to the Ville
Radieuse or Pruitt Igo:

The vision of the secular city is also tempting because it sweeps away
much of the complexities of the past and offers promise of a brave
new beginning. The "God is dead" approach to theology sounds
dramatic and dynamic and missionary and fearless... Black is black, and white is white, and a new era of the gospel is about to begin in the cold clear light of the secular city. How stirring! How romantic! And how wrong! The past is still with us, the city is still complicated, man is still narrow and provincial, and traditions still burden us and, on occasion, enlighten us. How dull! But how true!31

Greeley also invests himself in the idea of the church as an institution in the chapter, "A Institutionless Church?". Greeley takes a very liberal view of the institution's definition: "An institution is merely an established pattern of behavior or established way of doing things."32 The purpose of this chapter is to discover whether or not there can be a city without institutions. Greeley argues that this is not possible, and in fact contrary to the development of the city.33 He gives little supporting data for this conclusion and ends the chapter asserting that the Catholic Church must rid itself of all rituals no longer relevant to the contemporary city.34

The American Catholic (1977) provides chapters full of data on Catholic schools, parishes, clergy, politics, and ethnicity. Yet the most poignant and least consistent chapter is the one on the neighborhood. Here Greeley gives no data to support his convictions. Rather he discusses the substance of the neighborhood in strictly Jane Jacobs-esque terms. He describes mostly the immigrant, ethnic neighborhoods and parishes which emerged from cities like Boston, New York, and Chicago in the late nineteenth century. He argues that the neighborhoods received bad press from Catholic intellectuals trying to free themselves from the characterizations of their heritage.35 Greeley's bias favors the urban neighborhood over the antiseptic suburb. "The neighborhood has room for cranks and crabs, for the physically and mentally handicapped, and a
diversity of eccentric personalities." The full force of Greeley's loyalty to the neighborhoods comes when he discusses the critical importance of gathering places, especially the front porch and back alley. As secondary meeting places he cites the tavern, pool hall, or drug store.

But even Greeley himself recognizes the sentimentality of his argument:

I am a bit uneasy at the conclusion of this chapter. In virtually all the other chapters I think my data are incontrovertible. One may choose not to believe them, but the data still represents the hard facts of the most sophisticated modern empirical research. That kind of hard fact about the neighborhood simply does not exist... The depth of my personal attachment to the neighborhoods I have known and loved, and my horror at the casual way administrators, planners, and academics dismiss them, leads me toward poetry and ecomium on the subject of neighborhoods. If one wishes to understand American Catholics, one will have to understand that there are large numbers of us who share this propensity. It may be second-rate and mediocre of us, it may be abysmally particularistic and regressive of us, as some Catholic intellectuals have suggested; it may be that we will have to give up this non-ideological localism if we wish to be fully accepted into American society, but we will probably persist in our unreasoned attachment to our neighborhoods.

Greeley's next important contribution to understanding the post-Vatican II church is *The Communal Catholic* (1976). Here, he develops a portrait of the post-Vatican II Catholic and the church. Greeley also includes another chapter on the neighborhood which focuses on the parish. "The praxis of the parish reveals the human condition in all its complex, ambiguous, uncertain, messy dynamics. It suggests that the church is best built up, reconstructed, and reinforced by humans who do not redraw the crooked lines of God."
However, the primary goal of this work is to define what Greeley refers to as the communal Catholic, the post-Vatican II Catholic. And he does so follows:

1. The communal Catholic is loyal to Catholicism. It is his religious self-definition. He will have no other...
2. The communal Catholic is not angry at the ecclesiastical structure...
3. He does not expect to receive important instruction from that structure on any issue, ranging from sexuality to international economics...
4. Nevertheless, he is interested in and fascinated by the tradition to which he is loyal, and wishes to better understand it...
5. The communal Catholic seeks sacramental ministry from the church at such times in his life when such ministry seems appropriate and necessary— for some, every day, for others, only at rites of passage like baptism, marriage, and death.40

The emergence of this new Catholic requires shifts in the institution. Greeley argues that the ecclesial institution will recapture its credibility with communal Catholics only if it begins to acquire a set of six characteristics which are seeming paradoxes:

1. It must be both *humble* and *excellent*.
2. It must be both *traditional* and *radical*.
3. It must be both *relaxed* and *committed*.
4. It must be both *intellectual* and *sensitive*.
5. It must be both *realistic* and *hopeful*.
6. It must be both *mature* and *enthusiastic*.41

To those of us who have cut their architectural teeth on *Complexity and Contradiction* as the seminal "post-modern" text, these "both... and" phrases ring familiarly; to the Catholic, intellectual elite it may be otherwise. In any
event, Greeley's work closely corresponds to Venturi's text. In this respect
the architect can more easily characterize the mood of the church.

In a modestly entitled work, How to Save the Catholic Church (1984),
Greeley devotes a chapter to the discussion of the modern parish, "The
Parish as Organic Community". Greeley argues that the local church, or
parish, is truly the heart of the Catholic Church. He further reasons that
the parish is the religious counterpart to the neighborhood he so fervently
advocates. He asserts that the modern parish in fact retains four
characteristics of its predecessor:

1. The successful modern parish is an important social center...
2. The modern neighborhood parish offers the opportunity for
parishioners to recreate together...
3. In a modern neighborhood parish, parishioners are encouraged to
contribute to the political and cultural life of the community and of the
world beyond... [the parish as a learning center]
4. Finally, the modern neighborhood parish is the religious
community for most of its members.

Greeley understands the parish as more than an outlet for Rome's official
dogma. The parish becomes the important interface between the Church and
the community (city). "...[T]he genius of the men who began the urban
neighborhood parishes was that they appreciated the organic community of
the Catholic sensibility, even though they may not have articulated how this
was a logical correlate of the official Church position." Parishes are
constructed and structured to allow influences other than Vatican doctrine.
This appears as a stark contrast to the Vatican II impulse to purge the church
building of all that was not directly liturgical.
In creating a parish, the tradition was to emphasize the super-natural, or as architects might say, "the big idea". Greeley feels that successful parishes "discover the super-natural in the midst of the natural". He continues, "not many post-Vatican II parishes have made the successful transition from the static Counter-Reformation mentality to a more dynamic, collegial understanding of Church."\(^{46}\) Greeley may be talking about the social or ecumenical concerns of the church, but he also intends this as criticism of the built church, or the physical parish complex. He concludes, "... we challenge readers to develop their own insights - hopefully pre-programmatic - in response to our arguments. Stop to think and reflect and imagine before rushing to the Xerox machine."\(^{47}\) Greeley clearly indict those who advocate a single ideal for building a parish, in other words, Hammond's "plain, brick box".

The *Catholic Myth* (1990) contains a similar chapter on the parish. Here Greeley is somewhat less critical of what exists and more hopeful for what the parish can become, although his concerns here seem to be more religiously and socially rooted. The only reference Greeley makes to the physical dimension of the parish is an off-handed one, "The priest is the heart of the parish (though I sometimes think the basketball courts are almost as important!)."\(^{48}\) Greeley has the chance here to push his position on the neighborhood parish to its limits. If only he found the basketball court an equally essential part of the parish.

Similarly Greeley's concern for the neighborhood parish retreats not only into more abstract terms, but also to the scenario of the "traditional" city.
That the American neighborhood parish, a survival of the archaic in urban industrial society, is a Catholic phenomenon is not accidental. With their proclivity to imagine... community as sacrament, Catholics have a special tendency to set up intense communities wherever they can. The American neighborhood parish is the Sacramental Imagination... working its way in the set of circumstances in which it found itself in the big cities of North America.\textsuperscript{49}

It is unfortunate that in this recent work Greeley confines himself to refuting his critics rather than pursuing his arguments to their full extent. "So of course I like the neighborhood parish and the Catholic schools, as does almost everyone else - except those members of the Catholic pseudo-elite who get their kicks out of denouncing their own origins and their own people."\textsuperscript{50}

If Vatican II created and enacted new ideals for the Church, parish, and church building, Greeley's post-Vatican II era idealizes what is given, what exists, and what we know. Andrew Greeley, without a doubt, presents the most hopeful model for today's church. It is striking to see how closely his words on the neighborhood, church, and parish correspond to writings by Venturi and Koolhaas on the city. Greeley speaks at times in almost distinctly architectural terms. As a counter to the Vatican II period authors and their writings and as a bridge to the real, physical, and built church, Greeley provides a strong vision for the American Catholic parish and Church.
CHAPTER 2: THE CHURCH

Introduction

If liturgy proved the overriding concern of church architecture in the twentieth century, it may be at the cost of the church's relationship to the city. As is evident in Greeley's discourse, liturgy is only one of many interfaces that the Church has with its communicants. The following analyses of churches and parishes reveals how the ideals of Vatican II are infused into architecture, without neglecting the realities of the urban site. To this end a church and parish center in Detmerode, Germany by Alvar Aalto, St. Peter's church and parish at the Citicorp Building in New York City by Hugh Stubbins, and the Garden Grove Community Church in California by Richard Neutra illustrate exemplary solutions.

There are many churches, both pre-Vatican II and post-Vatican II which address issues specific to the church building proper, such as liturgy. However the churches chosen for this analysis are not only those which deal with the notion of the church, but also those attempting to redefine the church within the city.
Alvar Aalto in Germany

Alvar Aalto's parish center in Detmerode, Germany (1963-1968) shows a church and community center set into and linked to housing and a shopping center. It is not clear whether this church is Catholic, but many post-Vatican II churches resemble Protestant churches. What is so striking about this parish is the way in which it negotiates a commercial, pedestrian condition and a high-volume traffic intersection. The site plan (fig. 1) shows the parish as the culmination of two axes or shopping streets, one which runs parallel to the main artery and one which crosses over the road. At the intersection of these two minor streets Aalto creates a small square. The parish then has two important facades, the one which faces the larger intersection and the one which faces the square. The church and other buildings must then mediate between two radically different conditions of vastly diverging scales.

Aalto's strategy is to divide the program into pieces and then use circulation in plan, plus the sectional quality of the site to express each of the faces in a different manner. The facade facing the square has an arcade which is continued from the shopping center. Furthermore, the interior circulation becomes almost flush with the face of the church. The belfry stands on twelve columns and becomes a larger scale interpretation of the arcade with an increase in scale to address the four lane roadway. The resulting elevation (fig. 2) from the plaza is one which subtly distinguishes itself in both scale and vocabulary from the typical shopping strip.
Figure 1. Parish Center in Detmerode, Germany, Alvar Aalto. Site Plan.
However, the elevation remains "dumb" enough that it does not overtly contradict, but rather reinforces its context.

Similarly, the rear façade (fig. 2) successfully addresses the condition of the traffic intersection. The slight sectional difference in the site is used to put a chapel under the main body of the church, thus increasing its relative height from the driver's view. The community rooms and pastor's apartment also appear more prominent from the road due to the slight increase in sectional height. Aalto has carefully separated circulation to the different program pieces (fig. 3) to accomplish these two separate readings. While on the plaza side one must enter the parish building to find the different program spaces, the rear façade has its only exposed circulation at grade. Each of the program units, the church, community rooms, and pastor's apartment are visible from the road as objects or symbols of the parish. This rear façade reads as a sculptural interpretation of the parish.

To complete the scheme Aalto provides separate access from the side to the pastor's apartment. The belfry not only serves as a large scale sign for the parish, but also acts as the pivot point for the L-shaped scheme including the two shopping streets. Without question Aalto carefully considers the physical role of this institution in its semi-dense suburban setting. He not only addresses the relationship of the parish complex to the traditional pedestrian scale, but also to that of the car.
Figure 2. Parish Center, Detmerode, Germany, Alvar Aalto. Elevations and Section.
Figure 3. Parish Center, Detmerode, Germany, Alvar Aalto. Plan.
Hugh Stubbins: St. Peter's at Citicorp

St. Peter's Church at the Citicorp Building in New York (Hugh Stubbins, 1971) provides another unique interpretation of the parish in the (corporate) urban environment. The land containing the old church was sold to Citicorp with the stipulation that the new parish would remain on site, albeit reconfigured to allow for the office building. A plaza connects the church and the office building to a subway concourse. St. Peter's sits at the base of the building. It appears in the typical location of many glass atriums as a separate unit added to a tower. However, this addition is masonry with vertical windows extending the height of the church.

The church sits partly above and partly below the grade of the street. For this reason the ground floor plan (fig. 4) is orthogonal so as to easily accommodate program. The portion of the church which rises above the street has sharp and expressive geometry. The plan and massing of the church are not wholly satisfactory, however the sectional relation to the street is truly unique (fig. 5). The vertical windows not only allow light into the sanctuary, but they allow the street to serve as a gallery for the church (fig. 6). Passersby have almost a distinct view from above of masses or concerts which are performed in the church.

It is unfortunate that the architecture of the church does not capitalize on a scheme which tries to redefine the church's relation to the city (fig. 7). Although one enters the church from the street, the sectional relationship between the street and the sanctuary only works in one direction, creating a voyeurism. The position of this church both physically and symbolically is
very important, but the architect only deals with one or two urban issues it presents.
Figure 4. St. Peter's, Citicorp, Hugh Stubbins. Plan. (Architectural Record, Religious Buildings, p. 158.)

Figure 5. St. Peter's, Citicorp, Hugh Stubbins. Interior View. (Architectural Record, Religious Buildings, p. 158.)
Figure 6. St. Peter's, Citicorp, Hugh Stubbins. Interior View. 
(Architectural Record, Religious Buildings, p. 159.)
Figure 7. St. Peter's, Citicorp, Hugh Stubbins. Exterior View. (Ludman, p. 93)
Richard Neutra: Garden Grove Community Church

Richard Neutra's Garden Grove Church addresses another aspect of the urban realm absent from most church design, the car. Initially planned as a drive-in church exclusively, its final design contains traditional pews for the parishioners. However, the site plan (fig. 8) reveals Neutra's instance on the importance of the automobile. One cannot help but associate this radical parking scheme with that of a drive-in movie. Clearly the car dominates the architect's scheme. An image of Sunday worshippers (fig. 9), and particularly Neutra's own sketch (fig. 10) of these worshippers reinforce the precedence of the car in his vision of the contemporary urban church.

The vocabulary of the church is somewhere between commercial and industrial. The body of the church is a huge shed space made by curtain walls (fig. 11). The altar and cross are only one step above the congregation. As is typical in most Protestant churches the pulpit rises substantially above the floor of the church. The vocabulary of the stairs and pulpit are astounding. The stairs resemble an escalator ascending to a balcony above. The preacher then has the choice of addressing the parishioners in the body of the church or those in their cars in the parking lot via sliding glass doors which can be opened. The commercial feel of the church is even carried through in the light fixtures.

Neutra's simple plan, a hall church beside a parking lot appears at first glance mundane. But there is nothing simplistic or sophomoric in the will to incorporate the car and driver into the religious experience.
Figure 8. Garden Grove Community Cathedral, Richard Neutra. Site Plan. (Boesiger, p. 163.)
Figure 9. Garden Grove Community Church, Richard Neutra. Interior View. (Hines, p. 286.)

Figure 10. Garden Grove Community Church, Richard Neutra. Sketch. (Hines, p. 286.)
Figure 11. Garden Grove Community Church, Richard Neutra. Exterior View. (Boesiger, p. 177.)
CHAPTER 3: THE CITY

Introduction

To discuss the city, both the writings of Robert Venturi and Rem Koolhaas prove extremely useful as they echo the pleas of Andrew Greeley. Both Venturi and Koolhaas are important to the discourse on the contemporary city not because they bring ideals \textit{a priori} to their investigations, but because they \textit{discover} ideals from and in their investigations.

Venturi: Still Learning from Las Vegas

Venturi is able to map, diagram, and analyze the Las Vegas strip in architectural terms - form, order, symbol, decoration - rather than dismissing it as a sociological phenomenon. "We have approached the justification of symbolism in architecture pragmatically, using concrete examples, rather than abstractly through the science of semiotic or through \textit{a priori} theorizing."\textsuperscript{51} Through formal and historical analysis the strip gains merit for the qualities unique to it. Many characterize Venturi's book as being solely concerning the strip, but it truly reveals an understanding of the contemporary city, via one of its constituent parts, the strip.

It is at times difficult to separate his architectural criticisms from his urban commentary since most of the work goes to refute modernists: the insistence on symbol as equal of space, the idea of the "duck" vs. the
decorated shed, and so on. At certain times his thoughts on the contemporary city appear unencumbered:

Henri Bergson called disorder an order we cannot see. The emerging order of the Strip is a complex order. It is not the easy rigid order of the urban renewal project or the fashionable 'total design' of the megastructure. It is, on the contrary, a manifestation of an opposite direction in architectural theory... The commercial strip within the urban sprawl is, of course, Broadacre city with a difference. Broadacre City's easy motival order identified and unified its vast spaces and separate buildings at the scale of the omnipotent automobile... with no room for honky-tonk improvisations... But the order of the Strip includes; it includes at all levels.52

Venturi speaks about the urban sprawl city as a dynamic unity that could never sustain an idealized plan. Venturi's commitment to the strip as a valid urban entity closely parallels Greeley's unavering loyalty and belief in the neighborhood and the urban parish. Each is described as being able to support the kind of diversity, heterogeneity, and chance circumstance which animates the urban realm.

A traditional city can of course be mapped in a traditional fashion, caricatures of grids, or poché "Nolli" maps. Venturi describes in words the spatial orientation of the urban sprawl. "The space of the urban sprawl is not enclosed and directed as in traditional cities. Rather, it is open and indeterminate, identified by points in space and patterns on the ground; these are two-dimensional or sculptural symbols in space rather than buildings in space, complex configurations that are graphic or representational."53 But here, Venturi does not recognize the significance that "ducks" can have on the urban landscape. "Modern architects contradict
themselves when they support functionalism and the megastructure. They do not recognize the image of the "process city" when they see it on the Strip, because it is both too familiar and too different from what they have been trained to accept."\textsuperscript{54} What Venturi describes as the process city must include rather than exclude even those architectures which he finds unpalatable.

The table comparing "Ugly" and "Ordinary" architecture with the Megastructure is valuable in considering how each of these architectures contributes to the city. However, Venturi's tone wavers between wanting the sprawl city to accept all architectural conditions, and wishing to banish from the face of the earth anything which resembles "modern" architecture. Venturi places himself in the awkward position of advocating an urbanism which accepts all, while he rejects the "modernists" urbanism.

\textbf{Rem Koolhaas: Delirious...}

Rem Koolhaas takes Venturi's argument one step further. It make seem an unlikely alliance since Venturi is characterized as the father of "post-modernism" and Koolhaas as a fervent advocate of "neo-modernism". Koolhaas is able to write about the city in a way which Venturi cannot. \textit{Delirious New York} is difficult to use as more than a model for analysis. The language and images are so specific to the problem of dissecting and recreating Manhattan that the sensation about the images and language rather than concrete passages emerges as the most useful aspect of the work.
However, several of Koolhaas's articles provide more tangible evidence of his urban project.

"Our 'New Sobriety'" (1981) concerns itself with a reinvestment in "functionalist" or utilitarian architecture. It begins to hold implications for the urban scale, too. "'The plan is primordial, because all human activity takes place on the ground...') This formula of Raymond Hood defines a 'functionalist' architecture which is not obsessed with form, but imagines and places on the ground (that is to say the earth's surface) models of human activity according to unprecedented juxtapositions and appropriately catalytic combinations."55 This idea of planning is as valid for an urban strategy as it is for a building strategy. "In the 'new' historicist and typological architectures, culture is at the mercy of Procuste's cruel arsenal which will censor certain 'modern' activities because allegedly there is no place for them, while other programs will be artificially resuscitated simply because they fit well into the forms and types which have been given."56

This scenario envisions the case of the institution in the contemporary city. Possibly, the 'modern' or post-Vatican II church has not yet appeared because it has been censored or oppressed by the Church's architecture. "[T]he massive desertion of architecture's utilitarian camp will open the least enlivening perspective possible: the domain of modernity will be abandoned in favor of a situation where novelty is rare, imagination [is] displeasing, interpretation [is] subversive, and modernity increasingly exotic... this will be an era of new sobriety."57 Rather ironically, Venturi predicted the same fate, but rather due to the "censorship" of modernism. Clearly Koolhaas's commitment is to the interpretation of program in a variety of ways, rather
than to the expression of any one architectural ideal. The quandary of the parish is well-represented here. Most contemporary churches are devoid of imagination or dynamism because architects and clergy attempt to cram program into predetermined plans and forms.

Koolhaas analyzes both Berlin and Rotterdam in "The Terrifying Beauty of the 20th Century". His discussion of method is reminiscent of Venturi's process for studying the strip. "If there is a method in our work, it is a method of systematic idealizing; an automatic overestimation of the existing, a speculative bombardment which, along with retroactive, conceptual and ideological burdens, invests even that which is the most mediocre."58 As in Delirious New York, Koolhaas takes what is given in the city and considers it valuable simply because it exists, such conditions may not prevail, but they are able to withstand the pressures of the city and therefore must have merit. "The result of this work the most clinical inventory possible of each site, mediocre or not, combined with a ferocious insistence on its scandalous - and literally unbelievable - simplicity which dissolves the complexity of the contextual interpretation while giving justice to its refinement."59

Koolhaas's refusal of absolute conviction is both evident and refreshing in his language. More explicitly he adds, "... in fact, these arguments may only be a pure rationalization of a taste for asphalt, traffic, neon, crowds, and even others' architecture." This is, of course, the danger of this method of analysis. If one assumes value in all given conditions, it may be difficult to be adequately or consistently critical.
Koolhaas begins to deal with this loss of control in another article, "Imagine Nothingness" (1985). If one accepts the city for what it is, a certain amount of control must be relinquished to the city itself. Koolhaas begins, "Where there is nothing, everything is possible. Where there is architecture, nothing (else) is possible." He advocates here an architecture of restraint. This architecture of restraint will allow for unplanned program events to occur. But Koolhaas acknowledges that this is both distasteful and frightening for the profession. "The relentlessness of architects - ... is maybe something other than a mere professional idiosyncrasy, rather it is a reaction against the horror of all which is the opposite of architecture: an aversion to the void, a fear of nothing[ness]." Koolhaas establishes a radical position by questioning the role of architecture. His line of questioning reveals startling implications for both building and planning. For, his attitude accommodates any scale of consideration.

Koolhaas then begins to codify this notion of the void in terms of the city.

It is tragic that urbanists can only plan and architects can only design architectures to come. More important than the concept of cities is - ... that of their decomposition. Only a revolutionary process of erasing and creating 'free zones'... will allow us to put a stop to some of the torture inherent in urban life - thus, friction between program and constraint.

One can envisage these "free zones" not only as absorbing parts of the city which don't quite fit into a formal program, but also as taking on a life of their own and interacting with other zones. These voids become automatically programmatic and charged with significance. "Everything
reveals that this nothingness in the metropolis, is not void, that each void can be used for program whose otherwise insertion in the existing fabric abides by Procrustes and would lead to a double mutilation of both the activity and the urban fabric." The void can do what the traditional urban fabric cannot. It can accept programming rather than building as an alternative for developing space.

As an example of the "free zone" or void Koolhaas uses his Parc de la Villette competition scheme which he claims tries "to imagine the quality of this nothingness [void] at the heart of the metropolis." The conception of the void is not simply that of a blank or a whole in an urban composition. It is a carefully conceived zone whose location, size, and disposition with respect to other elements allow it to take shape and enhance a particular scheme.

Although Venturi and Koolhaas may have different dispositions regarding formal attributes of architecture, they both advocate an urbanism which is inclusive. Like Greeley's description of the parish as built-up rather than stripped down, Venturi's postcard of Las Vegas on the Nolli map of Rome suggests this kind of complexity and overlay, as do his analysis diagrams of the Strip which convey many levels of information. Koolhaas's vision for the city recalls Greeley's discussion of the neighborhood which allows a variety of conditions to coexist. One could easily imagine the neighborhood, or part of the neighborhood, as one of the "free zones" providing space for this heterogeneous entity to establish itself. And certainly, the examples of built works provide at least a few of these
conditions for examination. The link between the institution, the church, and urban discourse begins to bare itself.
CHAPTER 4: HOUSTON, DESIGNING FOR REINTEGRATION

The design portion of the thesis seeks to exemplify reintegration of the church into the contemporary urban realm. Using an area of Houston along FM 1960 as a piece of typical urban fabric in the twentieth century sprawl city, a parish complex is designed to address the issues unearthed in the research.

The commercial strip and the housing development are taken as polarized icons of the contemporary city. Analysis of several typical sights reveals the presence of a buffer zone between the commercial and residential tracts. This strip of neutral territory is exploited as the new home and new identity for the institution. The church at once bridges and defines the space for the new institution, as suggested by Greeley's and Venturi's "both... and" phrases.

Yet this new church struggles to compete in a hostile environment as evidenced by its concessions to commercial vocabulary. The old program of the church is ultimately at odds with its new milieu. This planning exercise succeeded to the extent where the residential, commercial, and institutional arms of the city could coexist. Yet, it reveals obstacles within the structure of the Church and prevalent conception of cities to harmony between the two.

The images which follow visually document the design process of the reintegration of a Catholic parish in the contemporary urban realm.
Figure 12. Images of two Catholic churches in Houston reveal an inability to successfully address commercial surroundings.
Figure 13. Cupola of St. Peter’s, and Esso Sign, Rome strike a visual chord of both compatibility in terms of monumentality, and incompatibility in terms of urban issues. (Constantine, p. 15.)
Figure 14. Commercial Strip along FM 1960, Houston.
Figure 15. Commercial Strip along FM 1960, Houston.
Figure 16. Interior of Commercial Strip along FM 1960. Reveals intermediate zone between residential and commercial zones.
Figure 17. Intermediate Zone as seen from behind commercial strip.
Figure 18. Aerial Photo of FM 1960. Red Corridor Represents Intermediate Zone.
Figure 19. Early Study Model. Disperses program in commercial zone only. Overdevelops, but fails to define intermediate space.
Figure 20. Early Site Plan Sketches. Shows different options for treatment of intermediate zone.
Figure 21. Early Study Model. Shows defining of intermediate zone as longitudinal space.
Figure 22. Midterm Site Plan Sketches. Shows ideas for development of intermediate zone.
Figure 23. Midterm Study Model. Shows development of commercial vocabulary.
Figure 24. Midterm Study Model. Shows development of cross axes in intermediate zone.
Figure 25. Midterm Elevation Study. Shows use of commercial signage to "monumentalize" institution.
Figure 26. Study Models of Church Building. Shows development of cross axes and introduction of intermediate space in church itself.
Figure 27. Final Site Model. Shows development of three zones.
Figure 28. Final Site Model. Shows church reinforcing cross axis in intermediate zone.
Figure 29. Final Site Model. Front elevation shows integration of commercial and institutional.
Figure 30. Final Site Model. Shows dialogue between longitudinal space of intermediate zone and cross axial space of church.
Figure 31. Church Plan and Surrounding Buildings. Shows development of cross axis and relationship of worshipper to parking.
NOTES


2 Ibid., p. 51.

3 Ibid., p. 57.


6 Ibid., p. 5.

7 Ibid., p. 6.

8 Ibid., p. 7.

9 Ibid., p. 11.

10 Ibid., pp. 192-193.


12 Ibid., p. 18.

13 Ibid., p. 19.

14 Ibid., p. 23.

15 Ibid., p. 24.


31 Ibid., p. 49.

32 Ibid., p. 52.

33 Ibid., p. 56.

34 Ibid., pp. 57-58.


36 Ibid., p. 228.

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38 Ibid., p. 230.


40 Ibid., pp. 181-182.

41 Ibid., p. 185.


43 Ibid., p. 167.

44 Ibid., pp. 171-176.


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49 Ibid., p. 158.

50 Ibid., p. 161.


52 Ibid., p. 52.

53 Ibid., pp. 116-117.

54 Ibid., p. 119.


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62 Ibid., pp. 160-161.

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64 Ibid., p. 161.
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Figure 32. Front Elevation.
Figure 33. Cross Section.
Figure 34. Longitudinal Section.
Figure 35. Side Elevation.
Figure 36. Side Elevation.