

Protestant Theologies and the Problem of Sacred Space. Divine/Human Relationships in American Chapels & Churches since 1945

Teologías protestantes y el problema del espacio sagrado.

Relaciones divino/humanas en las capillas e iglesias norteamericanas desde 1945

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ABSTRACT

The phrase *sacred space*, suggesting a spiritually evocative environment infused with divine or transcendent presence, is currently applied to almost all religious places, including almost all Christian churches and chapels. Yet Protestant leaders from the Reformation onward vigorously opposed such an understanding of God's relationship to humanly created worship space. For them, God was not immanent in specific spaces or buildings. How is it that Protestants came to embrace the idea of sacred space and apply it to their own churches? This essay explores the concept of sacred space and its relationship to Protestant architecture, focusing on the second half of the 20th century, a period that brought significant transformation to this relationship. The essay asserts that cultural, theological, and academic transformations occurring in the United States in the post-World War II period, resulted in the development of a universalized view of the sacred that came to undergird new religious spaces, particularly chapels meant to accommodate several faith traditions, which in turn helped to advance that view. Both the ideas and the buildings reflected a growing interest in personal spirituality and new understandings of the relative immanence and transcendence of God.

KEYWORDS

Protestant Theologies, Sacred Space, Chapels, Churches, American Modern Architecture.

RESUMEN

La expresión *espacio sagrado*, que sugiere un entorno espiritualmente evocador impregnado de presencia divina o trascendente, se aplica actualmente a casi todos los lugares religiosos, incluyendo casi todas las iglesias y capillas cristianas. Sin embargo, los sucesivos líderes protestantes de la Reforma se opusieron vigorosamente a tal comprensión de la relación de Dios con el espacio de culto creado por humanos. Para ellos, Dios no era inmanente en espacios o edificios específicos. ¿Cómo es que los protestantes llegaron a abrazar la idea del espacio sagrado y a aplicarlo a sus propias iglesias? Este ensayo explora el concepto de espacio sagrado y su relación con la arquitectura protestante, centrándose en la segunda mitad del siglo XX, un período en el que se produjo una transformación significativa a esta relación. El ensayo afirma que las transformaciones culturales, teológicas y académicas que ocurrieron en los Estados Unidos en el período posterior a la Segunda Guerra Mundial, dieron como resultado el desarrollo de una visión universalizada de lo sagrado que sirvió de soporte a nuevos espacios religiosos, particularmente capillas destinadas a acomodar a varias tradiciones de fe, que a su vez ayudaron a avanzar en esa visión. Tanto las ideas como los edificios reflejaban un creciente interés por la espiritualidad personal y nuevas comprensiones de la relativa inmanencia y trascendencia de Dios.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Teologías protestantes, espacio sagrado, capillas, iglesias, arquitectura moderna en EEUU.



Fig. 01. Hariri Pontarini Architects. Bah'ái Temple, Santiago de Chile, 2003/16.

In his recent TED Talk on the Baha'í Temple just up the mountain above this city, Santiago de Chile, architect Siamak Hariri described a chance witnessing of a private moment of a stranger that encapsulated his thinking about sacred space and focused his design process (Fig. 01). As a young architecture student, he watched a security guard who was going about his normal work in the Yale Art Gallery, a building designed by Louis Khan, reach out and touch the concrete wall, slowly running the fingers of one hand along the surface as he passed. This gesture touched Hariri; he took it as a «reaction of the heart». This emotional reaction, Hariri (2017) averred in his talk, was indicative of the realm of «the ineffable, the immeasurable». The guard was responding to a specific quality of the space—its spirit, if you will—and investing it with meaning.

About three months before viewing this TED talk, I had served on a panel on «Creating Sacred Space» at the University of St. Thomas, in St. Paul, Minnesota¹, where two of my fellow panelists, one an architect and one an architectural historian, discussed the concept of sacred space in terms similar to those used by Hariri. The architect showed a series of slides of places and buildings—Angkor Wat, Stonehenge, Macchu Picchu—that he felt epitomized *sacred*

space, an indwelling quality he felt was present in certain spaces that evoked strong human feelings or perceptions of an ineffable, transcendent reality. He, like Hariri, understood his task as a designer of religious space as creating spaces that accomplished this. The architectural historian on the panel added a new dimension, describing how a seemingly secular space—the WWII Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana—was also experienced and treated as a sacred space by visitors.

Labeling spaces used by religious groups as *sacred space* seems natural to most of us. What else would we call the spaces in which, in the words of historian Robert Orsi, people «meet their gods»? What other term could point to the complex emotional and physical experiences of the ineffable presence of the divine? To religious insiders, those invested in certain practices and understandings of a non-human, transcendent reality, *sacred space* simply *is* sacred, holy, infused with a supernatural reality (see, for instance, Bermúdez 2015).

Throughout most of their history, however, Protestant traditions categorically rejected this view of sacredness. From the 16th century until well into the 19th, both the Lutheran and Reformed wings of Protestantism rejected earlier Christian concepts



Fig. 02. HGA architects. Bigelow Chapel, United Theological Seminary, New Brighton (MN, USA); exterior.

of churches as spirit-infused spaces. Yet today the concept of *sacred space* pervades almost all discussions of religious architecture, and references to Protestant sacred space are common. For example, the award-winning Bigelow Chapel, designed by HGA architects Joan Soranno and John Cook for the United Theological Seminary of New Brighton, just outside of Minneapolis, Minnesota, was widely described as a sacred space after its dedication in 2004—even by then-dean of the seminary, Dr. Wilson Yates, an ordained Methodist minister and founder of the journal *ARTS: The Arts in Religious and Theological Studies* (Fig. 02-04)².

How is it that Protestants came to embrace this concept of sacred space and apply it to their own churches? What have been the ramifications of this shift in thought about worship space? In this essay, I want to explore this concept of sacred space and its relationship to Protestant architecture by focusing on the second half of the 20th century, the period during which this significant transformation occurred. Between 1945 and 2000, I will argue, cultural and theological transformations resulted in a new approach to chapel and church architecture that reflected a new interest in personal spirituality, a revision in understandings of the relative immanence

and transcendence of God, and a reimagining of the relative authority of clergy and laity in translating and interpreting religious experience. In fact, I will go so far as to say it signaled a new understanding of *religion* itself. The result can be seen in our contemporary language that paints all religious space with the same brush, dissolving difference and implying that all religions share an underlying perception of transcendent power.

This shift signaled a new chapter in an on-going Christian debate pertaining to the character of God: Is God close to humanity and engaged in human life/history, or is God distant, wholly other and unknowable? Should church architecture respond to or evoke a close, immanent divinity, or should it signal a distant, transcendent deity? Our current tendency to paint all religious space with the broad brush of *sacredness* has its theological and intellectual roots in the post-World War II period, when a convergence of cultural, social, and theological transformations changed how Americans thought about religion. The events of this early period account for some of the innovations and contradictions that continue to shape debate about *sacred space* to this day. My goal in this paper is to trace some of these convergences in an effort to shed some light on both this critical period



Fig. 03. HGA architects. Bigelow Chapel, United Theological Seminary, New Brighton (MN, USA); interior.

of transformation and the situation of Protestantism in our own time.

THE REFORMATION: THEOLOGY AND SPACE

The concept of *sacred space* has, of course, deep roots in Christian history. Pre-Christian Hellenistic religions and Judaism understood sacred space literally—temples were places in which gods and other divine beings actually resided. Christians, however, took the concept in a more metaphorical direction. Although the Eucharist, housed in a tabernacle or monstrance and seen as divine substance, pointed to a similar literal presence within the space of the church, by the medieval period Christian churches were seen as tropes of heaven, and Gothic builders attempted to recreate the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, in massive cathedrals. The notion of a church as wholly infused with holiness, with awe and mystery, took hold, and for many Christians, particularly Catholics, Gothic churches remain the quintessential Christian sacred space to this day.

Protestants, however, would reject these ideas. During the mid-16th century, as Christian reformers like Martin Luther expressed their opposition to the sale of indulgences, a fund-raising strategy intended to support, among other things, the construction of

Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome, debate about the nature of God and church space was cast in theological terms. Can this, or any, physical space contain God? Can the finite contain the infinite? The question had obvious ramifications for the meaning of the Eucharist: can the finite elements of bread and wine contain the infinite presence of the Lord, his body and blood? But it also had ramifications for church buildings: can buildings literally contain the Trinity?

Luther himself adopted a somewhat midway position with respect to this debate, as evident in his belief that Christ *was* present in the Eucharist, perhaps in a material way, but definitely in a spiritual one. Christ's risen, now fully spiritual, body was, like God, omnipresent, ubiquitous. But for Luther, this ubiquity was tied inexorably to the Word. Christians, he warned, should not seek Christ *everywhere*, but only in the Sacrament and the Word (Lugioyo 2015; Macy 2005). So while spaces and images could not contain Christ, and to seek him there was idolatry, in Luther's view, neither were these material things devoid of Christ. Reasoning along these lines, Luther opposed the more radical efforts of reformers toward iconoclasm; moreover, he preached these ideas from a pulpit replete with an image of the Virgin (Fig. 05).

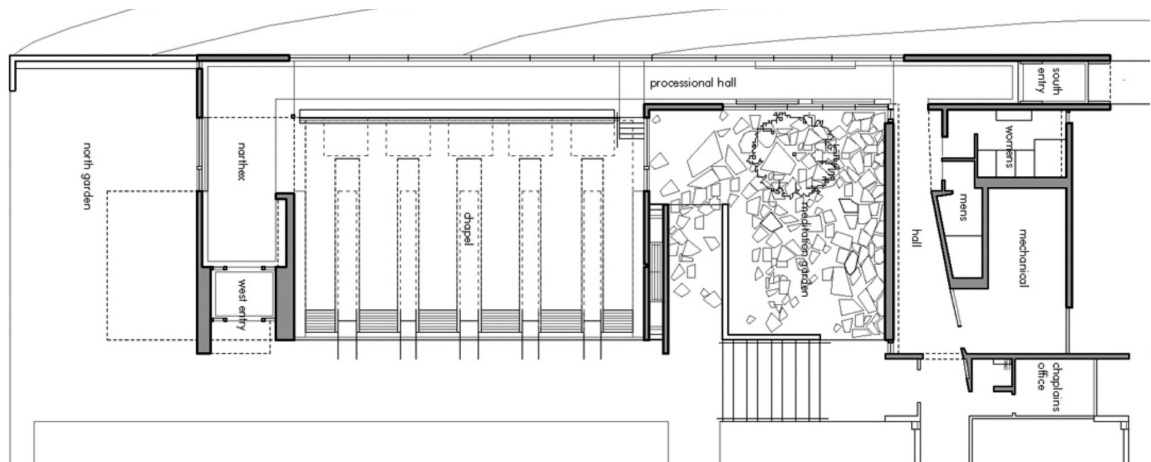


Fig. 04. HGA architects. Bigelow Chapel, United Theological Seminary, New Brighton (MN, USA); ground plan.

In contrast to Luther's position regarding whether the finite can contain God, French theologian John Calvin, head of the Reformed Church, uttered an unequivocal *no*. In his view, not only could the finite not contain the infinite, but the material was actually opposed to and even detracts from the spiritual. To attribute sacredness to any material object—whether bread and wine, a marble statue of a saint, or a place of worship—was to misunderstand and misrepresent the distinctive *otherness* of God, the separation of the finite and the infinite (Taylor 2007).

This theology of the otherness of God, of his transcendence—of the separation between the material human realm and the spiritual and infinite divine one—came to inform not only Reformed Protestants' understanding of the Eucharist and their condemnation of visual images and statuary, but also the very spaces in which Protestants would worship. Calvin asserted that the laity, who for centuries had been accustomed to going into churches to be near a holy presence, to commune with saints, must be disciplined to banish this understanding from their minds. Churches, therefore, were to be used only for Sunday services and should be closed and locked during the week so that individuals would not be tempted to stop in for a private worship session with a saint who was

not there (Dyrness 2004). Churches were not sacred places; they were places where one went with others to hear the Word of God.

Here we see the growing tension between two understandings of the relationship between God and humanity. Is God close and accessible to human experience, either directly or through a mediating saint or priest—i.e., is God immanent? Or is God uniquely different from humanity and thus distant and unknowable—i.e., is God transcendent? These are poles on a continuum, of course, with perspectives lying at various points between them. Reformation Protestants objected to the material character of divinity and the mediated relationships between divine beings (including saints) and humans within Catholicism—theological positions that fall on the immanent side of the continuum. They embraced a counter-position on the transcendence end of the continuum³. For these early Protestants, God was knowable through the Bible (the Word) alone⁴. This notion of God's distance and otherness was reflected in the strongly congregational- (as opposed to clergy-) and Word-centered worship practices and architecture of churches during the period. In the Reformed tradition particularly (including Puritan, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Reformed churches), the order of service was

closely tied to scripture and extemporaneous prayer by trained clergy, the Lord's Supper was shared equally by congregants seated around a table, and worship rooms were plain and utilitarian. No aspects of these services signified the presence of God.

This early configuration in which Catholicism deemed God to be more immanent and Protestants understood God to be more transcendent, would be flipped in the nineteenth century as Protestant theologies changed⁵. By the early 1800s, the emergence of revivalism and restorationism, which posited notions of a more accessible God engaged in human life, resulted in a growing Protestant embrace of the notion of divine immanence. Restorationist groups attempted to reestablish the activities of the Early Church as described in scripture, particularly to experience the blessings of Pentecost. These efforts raised the possibility of a closer, more active, immanent God, often identified with the Holy Spirit. By the end of the century, the early-century practice of baptism in the Holy Spirit—called sanctification—had been transformed into the full-blown experience of glossolalia, or speaking in tongues. In these new practices, religious experience had decidedly physical consequences and provided proof of an immanent God. God was not only present, but the Holy Spirit could directly suffuse and sanctify individuals.

At the same time, however, another strain of Protestant theology was starting to develop which would contribute to and reinforce this new Protestant interest in an immanent god. Known now as *liberal theology* and advocated by theologians like Horace Bushnell, this new approach hinged on the rejection of the idea of that all humanity was tainted with universal original sin and presented a picture of God as a loving deity. Humanity was understood to be universally saved if individuals followed the path of goodness and righteousness exemplified by Jesus⁶. The resultant notion that one could have a personal relationship with Jesus as a loving guide also brought a new level of immanence to many Protestants' understanding and experience of God, as witnessed in the popularity of the hymn «In the Garden» with evangelical Protestants since its composition in 1912⁷.



Fig. 05. St. Andreaskirche, Eisleben (Germany), s. XV; pulpit.

These theological shifts had architectural consequences. As the notion of divine presence lost its horror for Protestants generally, their church buildings began to include images of Christ and biblical stories in stained glass and to feature Gothic archi-



Fig. 06. Eero Saarinen. MIT Chapel (right, foreground), Cambridge (MA, USA), 1950/55; exterior.

tectural vocabularies. Although traditional Calvinists worried that Protestants were being hoodwinked by Catholic understandings of divine presence, the new adoptions continued, creating a Protestant architectural aesthetic that was quite different from that of their ancestors. The model of church as a tabernacle, a dwelling place for God in the Old Testament sense, began to gain traction (Kilde 2002). Yet Protestant congregations of the period did not characterize their churches as *sacred* in the same way as Catholics of the period would have. Even as congregations spoke of building houses for God, their rhetoric remained focused on the mission of the congregation and of the church within the world, not on the presence of God within their buildings

From the 16th to the early 20th centuries, then, we can see a history of negotiation between contrasting notions of the relationship between the finite and the infinite, the material and the spiritual, incorporated in the theological understanding of the nature of God and his relation to human life—within notions of God’s relative immanence or transcendence. Through this historical arc, we can trace the slow swing of the pendulum from the view of God as distant and transcendent to one of God as immanent among humanity⁸. Over the course of the twentieth century, the theological debate between these two views of the relationship between God and believers would continue, but now these two positions would grow concurrently within Protestant denominations, parallel to rather than in unison with each other, and we

can trace these in two distinctive lines of architectural development. On the one hand, the view of divine transcendence would find new expression theologically, socially, and architecturally, opening the door to contemporary characterizations of Protestant spaces as sacred. On the other, new forms of evangelicalism and Pentecostalism (affective religion) would join together to further advance notions of divine immanence, resulting in the fastest growing type of Christianity worldwide and in a new worship space: the megachurch, a type of building that while decidedly utilitarian has also come to be seen by some as *sacred space*.

DEVELOPING PROTESTANT SACRED SPACE IN THE POST WORLD WAR II PERIOD

To demonstrate and discuss what caused or influenced these rapid changes in Protestant thought and practice, I will turn to two buildings, or *milestones*, if you will, that embodied and advanced these ideas about God, and to the transformative post-WWII cultural contexts that informed them. Both buildings were designed by Finnish-American architect, Eero Saarinen, and both were completed in 1955. The MIT Chapel is familiar to many (Fig. 06-08). Its counterpart, the Oreon E. Scott Chapel at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, is perhaps less so (Fig. 09-11). I will focus on the MIT Chapel, using the Scott Chapel to underscore certain points.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) was founded in 1861 to advance science and engineering; four years later, the institution created the first school of architecture in the United States. Though the institution was devoted to science, its leaders had discussed the need for a chapel as early as the late 1930s. By the post-World War II period, with GIs returning from the war and flooding college campuses, bringing their wives and growing families with them, MIT President James R. Killian sought to provide «a place for spirit in human life» (Killian 2017) to balance the scientific training students received in the institute's classrooms and laboratories. Although the sympathies of MIT's leaders were entirely with Protestantism, they sought a building that would address the relatively new latitudinarian

understanding of religion—and of religious tolerance—encapsulated in a tri-faith model of American religion as Protestant/Catholic/Jewish. This view had been promulgated by the U.S. military during the war to foster fraternalism among the troops and by the late 1940s was further popularized as a Cold War characterization of America as a God-fearing nation in opposition to atheistic communism (Schultz 2013). What Killian felt was needed was a single building that would accommodate the spiritual needs of all of three groups. The idea was bold: it had been previously attempted at Brandeis University, but the effort had been quashed by benefactors who were uncomfortable with Jews worshiping in a building used also by Christians⁹.

As MIT now contemplated this idea, the head of the architecture school, Finnish architect Aalto Alvar, recommended his countryman and up-and-coming architect, Eero Saarinen, for the project¹⁰. The unique thing about this commission for a chapel was that it imposed no traditional religious vision on the architect, no specific theological or liturgical requirements. Beyond asking him to provide *a place for spirit in human life*, his client remained largely silent about what constituted spirit beyond agreeing on an underlying Protestantism, stemming in part from the institution's long informal association with Trinity Church across the river in Boston¹¹. Thus, Saarinen was left to his own devices in developing a religious vision for the building. In doing so, he would draw upon his Lutheran background to some extent but also, as he described his aim in letters with MIT leaders, a more generalized understanding of *spirit* and *spiritual*.

From the few documents we have in which Saarinen expressed his thoughts about religion and religious spaces, we learn that he considered religion a distinctly individualistic experience, not a corporate one. As he explained in 1960, «I don't think religion should be something easy. I think you should have to work for it, and it should be a spiritual thing» (Saarinen 1968, 96). Had Saarinen himself experienced this *spiritual thing*? Perhaps. He wrote about one experience as influential: «I had always remembered one night on my travels as a student when I sat in a mountain village in Sparta. There



was bright moonlight overhead and then there was a soft, hushed secondary light around the horizon. That form of bilateral lighting seemed best to achieve this other-worldly sense» (Saarinen 1968, 42). Further, we know that he believed that this other-worldliness, this spiritual thing, was best contemplated in private: the chapel, he held, should be a place where «an individual can contemplate things larger than himself» (Saarinen 1968, 42).

Thus, although Saarinen did not write much about religion, what he did leave is indicative of a fairly coherent philosophy of religion. That philosophy is strongly humanistic, focused on individual human experience and a human need to understand God. It emphasizes the need to separate oneself from the normal activities of the world to seek God. The journey toward God is best pursued in a place with a spiritual atmosphere in which natural elements predominate. And lastly, that spiritual search is ultimately a journey toward salvation.

All of these ideas are borne out in the MIT Chapel and the Oreon E. Scott Chapels. Both buildings are isolated in their respective settings. The MIT Chapel, built over a half-century ago, remains separate from the rest of the MIT campus, distanced from other buildings and surrounded by a moat. This is not a building one comes across by chance. One must seek it out, and when one enters, the separation from the rest of the world is readily felt. The Scott Chapel, intended not as a multi-faith space but as a prayer space for seminary students, is similarly isolated from its surroundings. In fact, early plans suggested that the building be buried underground (Alread 2008). One goes to these buildings to leave the world behind. Religious spaces, in the architect's view, should be «a decompression chamber from the outside world»¹².

Lacking windows, the interior spaces of these chapels isolate those who enter, as does a cave or a tomb. One loses all contact with the outside world. In

discussing the MIT Chapel, Saarinen noted, «a dark interior seemed right—an interior completely separated from the outside world» (Alread 2008) (Fig. 10). The windowless interior, the MIT Chapel website notes, «implied the self-contained, inward-feeling which was desirable» for a place of worship, and Saarinen «noted that its undulating interior walls promoted good acoustics as well as an *enclosed feeling*» (MIT Chapel 2017). His Drake Chapel feels particularly closed in—a world of its own. As architect Jason Alread has described it, the chapel's compressed space rapidly shifts one's horizontal focus to a vertical awareness, resulting in a «super compact, really emotional experience» (Alread 2008). The experience in both cases is reminiscent of Saarinen's description of his goal for another project, North Christian Church in Columbus, Ohio: «the congregation would have the positive feeling of being within the church, in a special enclosed spiritual world» (Saarinen 1968, 98).

These are spaces intended for individual contemplation, prayer, and meditation. This personal encounter is fostered further by the *spiritual atmosphere* that Saarinen achieved in large measure through the manipulation of darkness and light. Darkness is of particular import in encouraging a *spiritual feeling*—what one might think of, in the words of poet Dylan Thomas, as a *holy darkness*. The amount of light in both these chapels is not only carefully manipulated, but their materials, specifically the staining of the wood, grow progressively darker from their entries into their interiors (Alread 2008). The light in the Drake chapel enters only through an oculus, creating a dramatic effect. In the MIT chapel outside light reflected off the moat flickers up through low, overhanging windows onto the walls, creating a dynamic, moving interior, reminiscent of that night in the mountain village in Sparta. Unfortunately, according to long-time MIT Chaplain John Weustneck, this effect proved to be unreliable, as the growth of trees around the building and subsequent fallen leaves in the moat have minimized the reflected light (Weustneck 2017). Nevertheless, the undulating of the brick walls and the low lighting from the moat below suggest movement and energy. The ocu-

Fig. 07. Eero Saarinen. MIT Chapel, Cambridge (MA, USA), 1950/55; interior.

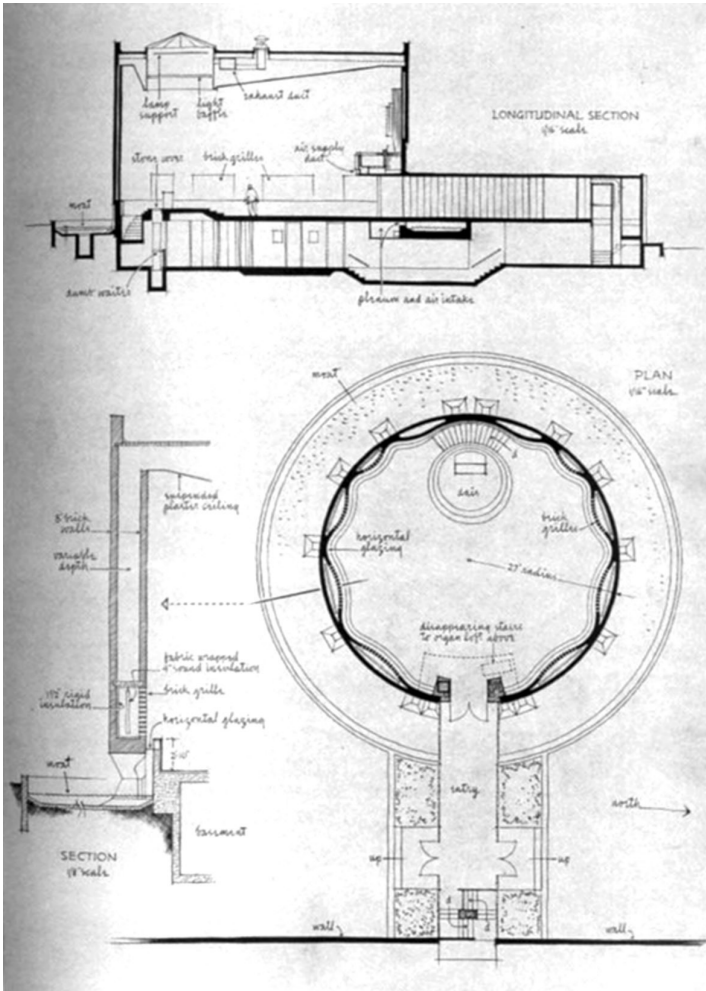


Fig. 08. Eero Saarinen. MIT Chapel, Cambridge (MA, USA), 1950/55; drawings.

lus shines more light down into the space, suggesting a tomb-like space, and the shimmering altarpiece sculpture by Harry Bertioia emphasizes movement and suggests the vertical climb up from the tomb to salvation. The Drake chapel with its ring of chairs and imposing central marble altar emphasizes the individual experience of prayer and meditation (Fig. 11). Contemplation of Christ's sacrifice, although not strictly theologically correct in the history of the Disciples movement, seems to be the fundamental purpose of this chapel. Here, the point appears to be to remain physically aware of other worshippers but

not to fully see or be distracted by them. Solitude remains fundamental.

These enclosed, intimate spaces with their mystical lighting were intended by Saarinen to foster a specific type of relationship between the individual worshipper and God. They are spaces in which, in Saarinen's words, «an individual can contemplate things larger than himself» (Saarinen 1968, 42); they are, as theologian Martin Marty has called them, «caves for sacred spelunking» (Marty 1958, 211). In these buildings, perceptions of God as both immanent and transcendent are relevant. On the one

hand, the *holy emptiness* (in theologian Paul Tillich's words) of these chapels—their spatial mystery and lack of ornament—suggest a highly transcendent God, one who must be sought through great effort, apart from worldly things. On the other, the earthiness of the chapels and the intimacy of their spaces imply a more embedded divinity and intimate that the search for God can be successful¹³.

Thus, although the chapels may not be making a definitive statement regarding the Christian deity, they are reflecting a new understanding of religion and specifically *sacredness* itself—and idea initially posited in the early 20th century but that did not become publicly embraced and disseminated in religious thought, activities, and buildings until this post-war period. In the early 20th century, several influential theologians pivoted from discussing the nature of God in terms of the Christian godhead within the Trinity to viewing it in terms of a generalized, universal concept of *the sacred*, a notion of divinity or super-naturalism that was understood as shared across many religious traditions. This concept would be formative in the development of the academic field of comparative religions.

The eminent German Lutheran theologian Rudolph Otto, though not the first to conceive of divinity in these generalized terms, brought the concept to prominence in his 1917 book, *Das Heilige. Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen*. In this work, Otto posited the quite radical argument (for a Christian theologian) that a universal religious experience underlies and thus links all religions. Recognizing that existing language, enmeshed in Christianity, could not adequately signal this universal experience, he coined the term *numinous*, based on *numen*, Latin for divine will or the spiritual presence of a place. By mid-century, the book, whose title was translated for the English version in 1923 as *The Idea of the Holy*, significantly influenced Christian theologians and ultimately architects¹⁴. The numinous, as a noun, quickly came to designate a broadly conceived transcendent power, *the holy*, characterized by *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, or a sense of a mysterious, terrible, wholly other, and overwhelming power¹⁵. Otto's conception

would become, and for many remains, the definitive conception of transcendent, divine power, and it quickly came to inform the work of many church designers and architectural historians¹⁶. It was another author, however, who translated Otto's idea of the numinous into even broader religious language—the Romanian-born religious studies scholar, Mircea Eliade, who reworked Otto's idea of the numen (or the holy) into the now ubiquitous idea of *the sacred* in his 1961 classic, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Eliade followed Otto in positing a conception of the holy, the sacred, as universal shared foundation across all religious traditions. In this view, all religions were seeking the same thing: numinous experience, or knowledge of and connection to *the sacred*. Eliade discussed in detail how the sacred «became manifest in» or infused specific spaces with a lasting holiness, a process he called a hierophany. These sacred spaces, he posited, were central to human experiences of the sacred (Eliade 1959)¹⁷. Although religious studies scholars would critique and ultimately reject Eliade's universalizing theory of religion and religious space in the 1980s, the damage was already done, so to speak, for an eager public embraced them and to this day they are prominent in public discussion¹⁸. In fact, this Eliadian conception of sacred space continues to inform the contemporary (and ubiquitous) use of the phrase¹⁹.

Eliade and Otto's ideas were central to the ecumenism that inspired the non-denominational chapels on college campuses. If what is sacred is sacred for all, no matter what tradition they come from, cooperation among members of different faiths was simply logical: as all religions seek an experience of the numinous, those spaces that are most evocative of it can have meaning across traditions²⁰. Thus there was no reason that Protestants, Catholics, and Jews could not share sacred space. Nevertheless, this idea took some time to be widely accepted. As we shall see, even at MIT, local Catholic and Jewish leaders expressed initial resistance to worshipping in the building.

Although Saarinen's MIT and Drake University Chapels were among the first buildings in the U.S. to articulate this new, generalized conception of divinity, they were far from the last²¹. Soon other

chapels would follow, including the Air Force Academy Chapel (1962) in Colorado Springs, Colorado, designed by Walter Netsch (for Skidmore, Owings & Merrill), whose upstairs/downstairs configuration (Protestants and Jews upstairs, Catholics downstairs) was inspired by Sainte-Chapelle in Paris (Clement 2008). By the 1960s and into the 70s, modernist multi-faith chapels were being built on college campuses across the U.S. and abroad²². The novelty of these modernist architectural forms in church architecture advanced this new understanding of religion as universal along with the concept of mankind, in Eliade's terms, as *homo religiosus*, proffering the possibility of linking all religious traditions and thus uniting diverse religious bodies within single buildings for worship.

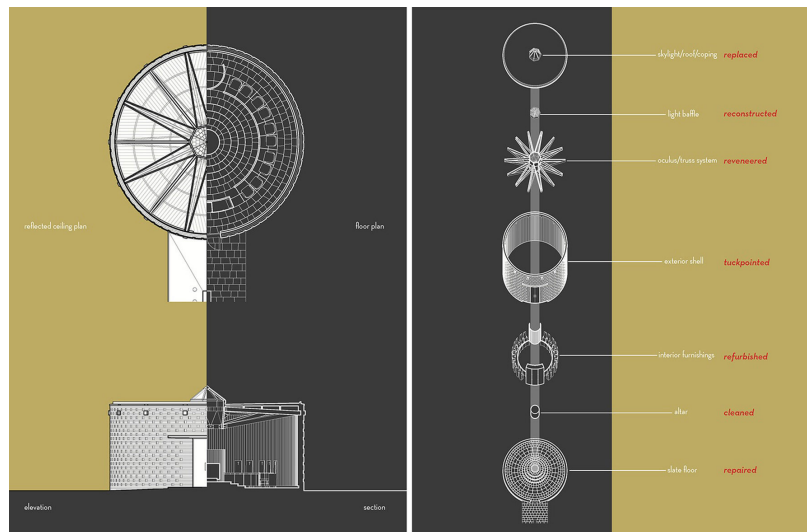
As might be expected, this transformation in religious thought also signaled a radical shift in religious authority during the period. The MIT administrators, who with Saarinen intended the chapel to be prayer space where individuals from many traditions could come for prayer and meditation, intended to hire a chaplain who would be latitudinarian in perspective, sympathetic to many religions, though of course Protestant (Baker 1950). Despite this explicit authorization of Protestantism, this conception clearly shrank the authority of the chapel head as a religious leader. Who exactly would be expected to authorize or interpret religious experience in this building? Authority, the answer appeared to be, would be contingent, left to be discerned by users and negotiations among chaplains, administrators, and students²³. Contingent authority can lead to contestation, and crises did indeed arise quite quickly, as when the local Catholic parish priest refused to hold mass in a building not consecrated by the church. In this case, the matter was quickly resolved by the archbishop, Richard J. Cushing, who came himself to celebrate the first mass in the chapel. And when the Jewish student group similarly raised opposition to gathering in a Christian space, their protest was also quelled. In the Drake Chapel, the circle of chairs purposively eliminates any indication of authority, indicating that all are equal within this space. Nevertheless, clerical oversight, if behind the scenes, retained some influ-

ence, providing, for instance, detailed instructions for how the communion service should be performed.

As similar non-denominational chapels were constructed across the United States in the late 1950s and through the 1960s, most followed the MIT model of minimal iconography, strong references to nature, and latitudinarian policies regarding building uses²⁴. No longer would the power to interpret God and the meaning of religious experience rest only, or even primarily, with trained clergy; this was Luther's conception of the priesthood of believers revised for the 20th century. This tendency would have its fulfillment a generation later with the 1990s *spiritual but not religious* attitude, fundamental to which was the idea that one's meeting with one's god need not be, should not be, proscribed or mediated by any organization or trained guide. In this view, ontological and epistemological connection with the divine is a deeply personal, individual experience, and therefore an authorized location for that experience is not required. Any space that evokes such numinous experience is thus *sacred*²⁵.

Carrying these ideas beyond the college campus into the broader public, a number of non-denominational public chapels in which numinous experience was fostered also sprang up around the United States²⁶. One example, the Roofless Church in New Harmony, Indiana, created by Philip Johnson in 1960 for Jane Blaffer Owen, founder of the Robert Lee Blaffer Foundation, has been called «an exercise in defining a sacred space»²⁷. Johnson designed a rectangular worship and mediation space enclosed by a brick perimeter wall and dominated by a pavilion at one end: a shingled dome suggestive of a draped cloth. Centered within this space is artist Jacques Lipchitz's sculpture, «Descent of the Holy Spirit», an image of a dove flying downwards to a figure of the Virgin Mary, who is supported by a cloud of animals. Themes of ecumenism, divine immanence, nature, and universal spirituality abound in the space, which was dedicated on Pentecost Sunday (June 2) 1963 by theologian Paul Tillich, who declared «I (...) dedicate the ground of this park (...) to a new reality, conquering what is estranged and reuniting what belongs to each other, in the power of the Spiritual Presence»²⁸

Fig. 09. Eliel & Eero Saarinen. Memorial Oreon E. Scott Chapel, Drake University, Des Moines (IA, USA), 1945/55; schemes.



(Kimberling 2017). While the iconography is Christian (the Virgin, holy spirit, and the related *Pieta* sculpture by Stephen de Staebler at the opposite end of the enclosure), the Protestant/Catholic/Jewish vision of religion in America provided the context in which Lipchitz's participation as a Jewish artist made sense. With its maturing trees and plantings throughout the enclosure and under the canopy, this space signals the unity of nature and Christianity with a universalized immanent divinity.

A decade earlier, Wayfarer's Chapel in Rancho Palos Verdes, California (1949/51), designed by architect Lloyd Wright (son of Frank Lloyd Wright) for the Swedenborgian denomination, was also touted as open to anyone who wanted a quiet place to meditate (Wayfarers Chapel 2017). This example of environmentally integrated, *organic, architecture* (in Frank Lloyd Wright's parlance) explicitly evokes a connection between nature and the sacred as intimated by Otto, articulated later in Eliade, and incorporated into buildings like the MIT Chapel. Whereas the Roofless Church and the Tillich inscriptions posit a theology of nature, of an immanent spirit descending yet all but uncontainable in the billowing structure, the Wayfarer's Chapel projects all attention beyond

the walls of the building, out into the landscape and ocean beyond²⁹.

The emphasis on the relationship between the divine, nature, and humanity in these buildings and in the Saarinen chapels was a new element in what remained essentially mainline Protestant architecture, regardless of their ecumenical intentions, and responses to it varied³⁰. Tillich who proclaimed that «Man and nature belong together in their created glory—in their tragedy and in their salvation»³¹, not only dedicated the Roofless Church and visited the site often, but chose it for his final resting place. Nonetheless, he did warn that although *the idea* of buildings like the Wayfarer's chapel «should be to draw nature into the sphere of the Holy Presence», it often seemed «that the opposite happens: the members of the congregation are drawn away from concentration on the Holy Presence to the outside world» (Tillich 1962, 124). Nature, in other words, could also divert one's attention from the divine. Following Otto and Eliade, Tillich argued that the *sacred emptiness* of these modernist spaces is successful if it makes «the numinous character of the building manifest» and thus available to be experienced by those who seek God there (Tillich 1962, 124; see also Baek 2009).

Church historian, scholar, and Lutheran minister Martin Marty may have disagreed somewhat with this assessment. At least some of the buildings discussed above, with their embedded notions of a generalized sacred experience and related emphasis on personal spirituality, would have fallen into a category that Marty called *holy holiness* in his 1961 critique of church architecture, that is, architecture focused too heavily on divine transcendence. Using the categories of immanence and transcendence to think about the function and messages of church buildings, Marty labeled the opposing strategies as *worldly worldliness*, in which immanence is primary, and *holy holiness*, in which transcendence is primary³². Both, in his view, are heretical. Holy holiness assumes the wholly otherness of God and fosters a false spirituality that divorces God from humanity and human history. In contrast, worldly worldliness reduces God to being solely involved with history, a «captive of the world», in his language (Marty 1961, 34). Echoing Luther, Marty recommended a middle ground: a holy worldliness in which church buildings serve the Word (and its reception during services) and foster the mission of the church in its engagement with the world by encouraging «interaction, openness, and encounter», characterized by «honesty, modesty, beauty, and truth» (Marty 1961, 31 and 35). For Marty, churches should be communal and ethical: the *tent of the people of God*. In his view, the personal quest for numinous experience, which would later inspired the emerging «spiritual but not religious» attitude, fell in large measure (through not entirely) outside Lutheran and Reformed lexicons³³.

While Marty is vague on the specific architectural details to be recommended, Lutheran architect Edward Sövik would take up the challenge about a decade later, making a similar argument advocating for buildings designed to foster the Church's mission. For him, immanence is the central theological idea: God came among humanity with the Incarnation and remains everywhere. Countering Tillich's view of the ideal church as enveloping *holy emptiness*, Sövik argued that churches should physically articulate not an understanding of God but the mission of Christianity in the world. For him, churches should

embody ethics, not theology. They were to be centers from which Christian activity would stretch outward, in the form of stewardship and human engagement. Using language reminiscent of the age-old Reformation question regarding the finite and infinite, Sövik specifically objected to the growing understanding of churches as sacred space: if a church is thought of as a *house of God*, he warned, «then it will sooner or later be thought of as a holy place; and then other places will be seen as profane or secular; and then we shall again be denying what the church really believes» (Sövik 1973, 70), i.e. that God is immanent *everywhere*. Although also influenced by Otto's idea of the numinous, Sövik assumes that what the church really believes in is the ubiquity of the divine, but the human response to this presence must be ethical rather than pietistic. Thus, architectural efforts to inspire mystery or awe or a «mood of worship» were, in his view, «brainwashing», an attempt to «seduce» people away from the ethical mission toward individual spirituality (59-60). For him, churches must «serve the work of the church» (51-52), which he understood as ministry and mission. Although Sövik's open-plan churches, called *centrums*, with their moveable walls and furnishings, garnered a good deal of criticism from traditionalists, they did fit progressive theologians' view of the role of the church as engaged in the issues of modern life during a period of social upheaval in which Christian congregations were often criticized as sitting on the sidelines so as not to alienate members who did not want to become involved (Buggeln 2015)³⁴.

But even as these Lutheran theologians were discussing the nature of God and its bearing on church architecture, one wing of Reformed Protestantism, Evangelicalism, was undergoing a striking transformation that was poised to take post-war Protestant architecture in a new direction, one that assumed the radical immanence of God and fulfilled Martin Marty's fears about worldly worldliness in church architecture.

As Evangelicalism began to reemerge from relative obscurity in the post-war period³⁵, Billy Graham's Madison Square Garden Revivals of 1957 laid the foundation for a new revivalism that placed God squarely within the world and within even the most



Fig. 10. Eliel & Eero Saarinen.
Memorial Oron E. Scott Chapel,
Drake University, Des Moines
(IA, USA), 1945/55; exterior.
Fig. 11. Interior.



trivial aspects of human life. A focus on building a personal relationship with Christ as a road to salvation was enhanced by Graham's revival techniques and spaces. Graham's arena revivals inspired a spate of imitators, revivalists like David Wilkerson and Nicki Cruz travelled the country holding revivals in high school auditoriums, pitching to teens their stories of lives turned around, transformed from the desuetude of drugs and from deprivation through a personal relationship with Christ. Like their predecessors in the nineteenth century, these revivalists appealed to the audiences' personal emotions—guilt, remorse, desire, hope—and urged them to struggle with their inner conscience, repent of their sins, and seek salvation through Jesus. In this equation, one seeks God not through the Word or awe-inspiring communion with a holy space but through examination of one's own heart.

Evangelical church architecture, which had developed a variety of *technologies for salvation* in the nineteenth century—including auditorium seating and pulpit stages, anxious benches, heating and cooling systems to maintain worshippers' physical comfort, kitchens and lounges, and Sunday school spaces—adopted new strategies in the late 20th century designed to draw even larger crowds to

Christ and accommodate new economies of scale. Arena seating grew massive. The first American megachurches, Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral and Bill Hybell's Willow Creek Community Church, seated 2700 and 4500, respectively. More recent U.S. megachurches boast seating capacities of 7500 in the recently rebuilt Willow Creek and 16,000 in Joel Osteen's Lakewood church in Houston (the former Compaq Center sports arena). But even these mammoth buildings are dwarfed by Pentecostal churches abroad, particularly two near Lagos, Nigeria: the 50,400-capacity Faith Tabernacle and the jaw-dropping mile-long Redeemed Christian Church of God Camp, which reputedly accommodates over 300,000 (Hammond 2015; Bird 2016). Size matters for these groups for several reasons, not the least of which is the persuasive power of large numbers in reassuring participants that their beliefs are widely shared and thus, one assumes, correct. This assurance that many others share one's beliefs is a fundamental mechanism for maintaining and sheltering ideas or beliefs from criticism (Francis 2013), and architecture plays a vital role in the process. The social and physical connections that these spaces encourage directly counter the individualistic contemplation model of

religious experiences embedded in the chapels discussed above.

These evangelical beliefs have everything to do with divine immanence, as anthropologist T.M. Lurhmann (2012) demonstrates in her ethnographic study of Vineyard congregations. The Evangelical believers described in her research travel a distinctive path of learning and practice that train them to perceive God as constantly involved in their lives (Lurhmann 2012, xxi-xxiii). Within the megachurches that Evangelicals attend, electronic features and stagecraft enhance the reception of these lessons and foster an emotional connection with God. This is not the *spiritual presence* that Tillich imagined, however. Instead, for contemporary evangelicals, direct experience of God's presence, once learned, is understood to be the norm, an everyday occurrence³⁶.

The theological emphasis on God's concern for one's salvation broadened in the last quarter of the twentieth century to include the new idea that God is also concerned for the betterment of all aspects of the individual's daily life: from one's physical health to relationships with family and friends, to financial wherewithal. The now wildly popular *prosperity gospel* grew from these roots by bringing together ideas of salvation, positive thinking, faith healing, and sacred ubiquity that focused not only on God's immanence and engagement in history but within believers' everyday lives (Bowler 2013)³⁷. A message highly attractive to many people, this prosperity gospel and related Pentecostalism has swept across the globe in recent decades and is the driving force in the huge churches, not only in Lagos but also in Seoul, Hyderabad, Manila, Mumbai, Santiago, and many other cities around the world³⁸.

This architecture of immanence, what in Marty's terms would be the pinnacle of worldly worldliness, would seemingly fall far outside the category of *sacred space*. These megachurches boast lavish arenas and expansive performance stages, state-of-the-art visual and audio technologies, concourses and coffee shops, bookstores, classrooms, and recreational facilities, and eliminate almost all ornamentation, resembling, as a result, a fusion of secular buildings (airport, shopping mall, corporate campus) more

than the traditional churches. Yet even these edifices are understood by some worshippers to fall into the category of sacred space. As Loveland and Wheeler report, some of these congregations have sanctified their churches with the Word by placing Bible verses on slips of paper into the poured concrete foundations or reading the Bible aloud within the new building (Loveland and Wheeler 2003). Such actions point to an Eliadian understanding of the sacred and sacred space: space in which the sacred has been manifested. Thus, perhaps at no earlier time in history have buildings associated with Protestantism achieved such a level of *sacredness*, a universal idea of holiness intended (or not) to be meaningful across religious traditions.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us that in the early eighteenth century, the phrase *sacred space* referred specifically to land owned by the Christian Church, that is, to land *owned* by God, religious space as opposed to worldly space. Protestants rejected any notion that their churches were sacred in any other sense. By the late twentieth century, the term had come to denote space, even Protestant churches, understood to be infused with transcendental power, space in which God, or numinous is made manifest—a concept that signals the notion of a universal supernaturalism, which may be transcendent or immanent in its relationship to humanity and the world. This transformation, as we have seen, emerged in the postwar period as new theological, social, and academic ideas took hold. It was embodied in and advanced by architectural modernism, which emerged at the same time and which fused notions of both transcendence and immanence within buildings we would now call multifaith chapels.

The significance of these processes can be seen in the continued embrace of the term *sacred space* to describe almost all religious space, but particularly space that evokes a spiritual experience. Even the foremost type of evangelical space, the megachurch, for all its secular aspects, has been transformed by some congregations into *sacred space*, suggestive of an in-dwelling holy presence³⁹.

The growth of the universal notion of the sacred and its corollary in sacred space is equally evident in the pivot away from traditional religion that has accelerated in the twenty-first century, providing a shelter for those for whom the term *religion* has accrued negative connotations. Just when many people eschew *religion* and its organizational and theological authority in favor of personal numinous experience, religious space now termed *sacred* accomplishes a linguistic sleight-of-hand that vanishes *religion* or, more precisely, theologies and histories.

So while the religious spaces designed by talented architects like Hariri and Soranno that I mentioned in my introduction are quite beautiful and may well be spiritually evocative, it is incumbent upon students, scholars, and artists to avoid using the phrase *sacred space* uncritically, to keep an eye on the historical roots of what at its origin in the postwar period was a radical new understanding of religion and religious space. As we look for meaning in Protestant spaces, our task is to compare and interrogate the specific relationships between God and worshippers that are embodied in buildings and articulated in discourses and practices.

NOTES

(01) The panel organizer, David Jordan Harris, noted in the press release that «the arts play a vigorous, multi-dimensional role in the human construction of what is sacred in our midst» (University of St. Thomas 2017).

(02) On the Bigelow Chapel as sacred space, see Combs 2011. Wilson Yates is quoted in *Society of Architectural Historians* 2017.

(03) These oppositions also mirror the *faith vs. works* debates within Puritanism.

(04) By the eighteenth century, with the Enlightenment embrace of natural theology, Protestants came to also believe that God could be known through creation (Nature).

(05) Taylor (2007) notes that immanence and transcendence are in relation to one another.

(06) Bushnell's ideas followed in part from earlier Deism, Universalism, and perhaps, Vitalism. See Fischer 2016.

(07) «In the Garden» was composed by Charles Austin Miles. The lyrics recite a first-person recite a narrative about walking and talking with Jesus in a garden. The song became a staple at Billy Sunday revivals in the early 20th century.

(08) Contemporary neo-Calvinists have revived many of the earlier views.

(09) Saarinen bid for this project but was not awarded the commission. A non-denominational chapel was also constructed on the campus of Montana State College in 1951, with funds from the Danforth Foundation, which funded similar chapels around the country. See Grubiak 2012.

(10) Alvar's recently completed Baker House, a dormitory on the MIT campus, would provide some inspiration for Saarinen as he considered the brickwork for the chapel.

(11) When describing the qualifications for a new Dean of the Chapel, the current Dean of Students, Everett Moore Baker wrote: «..he should not be strongly sectarian. He must have a sympathy and understanding for representatives of all religions, although he should, of course, be a Christian Protestant» (Baker 1950).

(12) That this was a conscious aspect of his understanding of sacred space is clear from his discussion of his intent in the partially submerged approach and entry to his iconic North Christian Church in Columbus, Indiana: «there should be awareness of a changing environment, like a decompression chamber from the outside world into the church. Maybe you would go down and then up again into the sanctuary. The light, of course, would begin to change, too» (Saarinen 1968, 96).

(13) Mark Torgerson (2007) notes that in their struggle to understand God's immanence and transcendence, many Christians have held the two together in a paradoxical relationship.

(14) Robert Orsi (2012) has pointed out that the English translation of the title as «The Idea of the Holy», softens the impact of Otto's point about «The Holy».

(15) The idea of the numinous owed a good deal to Western understandings of Hinduism and Sanskrit texts.

(16) Nigel Yates' classic text on liturgical space (2008), for instance, hinges on congregations creating buildings that achieve or instill a numinous sense. A recent collection of essays, published by the Catholic University of America Press (Bermúdez 2015) demonstrates the continued relevance of Otto's conception of the numinous in architectural analysis and criticism, taking it as a central theme within Christian architecture.

(17) Eliade's specification that a sacred space was made so by a hierophany expanded earlier definitions of *sacred place* as denoting land belonging to God or consecrated to God. See the «Sacred space» entry in Chambers 1728.

(18) For a summary and critique of Eliade's idea of religions, see Pals 2014; for a critique of Eliade's conception of sacred space, see Smith 1987.

(19) A comprehensive history of the development and use of the concept is needed. While evilness, in the form of the devil, was frequently understood to inhabit specific places (e.g. the New World wilderness for Puritans), references to a generalized holy inhabiting presence seem to be rare. God is invoked to enter churches through consecrating practices. Or he is not assumed to be *present* in this manner.

(20) The fact that this was occurring on college campuses meant that these ideas would be absorbed by students in their formative years and normalized in succeeding years.

(21) It should be noted that Mies van der Rohe's building, the Robert F. Carr Memorial Chapel of Saint Savior (Sanctus Salvator), erected in 1952 on the campus of the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, preceded the MIT Chapel. Like the MIT Chapel, this Episcopalian chapel was intended to be suitable for use across all religious traditions. The central cross could be covered with a curtain, but the marble travertine altar was permanent. The benefactor, Robert F. Carr, president of Dearborn Chemical, was an active member of the Episcopal Church. Later assessments emphasize its utility as a place for private prayer and reflection although a review of the building in 1953 declared it quite devoid of mystery or sacredness (Ottenheimer 1953).

(22) Examples in the United States include the yurt-like Agnes Flanagan Chapel (1968) with its Native American references on the campus of Lewis & Clark College, and the Weyerhaeuser Memorial Chapel (1969) on the campus of Macalester College. Examples of modernist chapels abroad include I.M. Pei's 1963 Luce Memorial Chapel on the campus of Tunghai University in Taichung (China). For an overview of the extent of college chapel building in this period, see Grubiak 2014. While Grubiak argues that these buildings, erected just as denominational colleges were *losing* their religious identities, were passé or obsolete and had little purpose even as they were being built, I contend, in contrast, that these buildings were central in articulating and advancing the new understanding of religion and *the sacred*.

(23) On student efforts to use a college chapel as a sanctuary for evading the draft during the Vietnam War, see Kilde 2010.

(24) Examples include the Air Force Academy Chapel in Colorado Springs, the Marine Corps Memorial Chapel at Quantico, Virginia, and the Merchant Marine Academy Chapel in King's Point, New York, described in Price 2012. See also Grubiak 2012.

(25) When asked to identify a space *sacred* to them, students in my courses on religious space often cite their childhood bedrooms.

(26) Another chapel offering a quiet place of meditation for individuals from across traditions is the Rothko Chapel (1964/71) in Houston, Texas, created by artist Mark Rothko with the aid of a succession of architects: Philip Johnson, Howard Barnstone, and Eugene Aubry.

(27) The quote is from the Ohio State University Austin E. Knowlton School of Architecture, digital library website (*Ohio State* 2017) which sites the Philip Johnson/Alan Ritchie Architects website (*Philip Johnson* 2017).

(28) The building and site advance the idea of a general *sacredness*, but the phrase *sacred space* was not yet in wide use.

(29) The Roofless Chapel is also claimed by more formalist groups. It serves, for instance, as the cover image of Larson-Miller 2016.

(30) Protestants did bring organic, nature-based ornamentation into their churches in the 19th century, but their interest in doing so stemmed not from natural theology but from connections between domestic life and nature. It was during this period that Protestants also began to speak of an immanent God within their churches. See Kilde 2002.

(31) This quote appears on a plaque at the entry to the Paul Tillich Park located across the street from the Roofless Church in New Harmony, Indiana. See also Owen 2017.

(32) Marty's conception of the two categories, however, is slightly different from that which I have posed thus far. For Marty (1961), immanence refers to God's activity within history, not just the current relationship between humanity and divinity. Transcendent notions of God, in Marty's view, remove Him from history, understand God as exclusively holy: a notion divorced from the world (worldliness) and the center of Christian knowledge, the Word of God.

(33) Marty (1959) developed these categories of worldly worldliness and holy holiness after publishing an article focusing on college chapels, including the MIT chapel. In that earlier article he does not comment on the atmosphere of the chapels, but he does write admiringly of their sculptural forms and relevance to modern campus life.

(34) Buggeln argues that congregations typically eschewed theological understandings of their church spaces. She notes that while many architects looked to their clients to understand the theological conception of space, such questions were of little concern to congregations that were more focused on their need for spaces to accommodate gatherings, social activities, and children's education. Church members were concerned about creating welcoming and functional buildings, than investing them with theological meaning (Buggeln 2015). One congregation, First Baptist in Bloomington, Indiana, summarized their desires as wanting a building «so simple and meaningful and honest, that no one will be made afraid by lavish appointments or pretension in any form» (66-67). They noted their distinctive difference with the Catholic congregation next door, long housed in

a Gothic church, saying that their new church would signal the Baptist *nonauthoritarian* tradition and would «strike a contrast with St. Charles Church». As Buggeln demonstrates authority was a key interest in these congregations, and they strongly favored shared authority among laity and clergy.

(35) Historians have argued that Evangelicalism stepped out of the public light after the debacle of evolutionism in the 1920s. Although the Scopes case was a win for the anti-evolutionists, state after state in subsequent years voted down measures to prohibit the teaching of evolution in public schools. Evangelicals stepped out of the public sphere and develop private networks for education and worship.

(36) For a brief overview of the new literature in this area, see Justice 2013.

(37) The idea of divine immanence has been applied in several contexts, here to immanence in individuals' lives, to a physical immanence within spaces as discussed in this paper, to immanence within history or within a society as in the concept of divine providence.

(38) For a list of global megachurches, see Bird 2017.

(39) The radical immanence of God within believers' lives advocated by evangelicals worldwide and witness by the related growth of megachurches is slowly being understood as the immanence/presence of God within these building. See, for instance, the op-ed piece by the Reverend Stephen A. Curry on the violation of the *sacred space* of the First Baptist Church in Wilson County, Texas, where twenty-six congregants were murdered on a Sunday morning (Curry 2017).

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