

Church Architecture: Theology and Doxology Symbolized
Session Four: Where's the Action? From the People: Praise, Prayer, and Participation
Key Worship Perspectives: "Let Solemn Awe Possess Us" (CW 574)
Transcendence in Worship

A. Transcendence defined

Isaiah 6:1-5

Psalm 5:7

Hebrews 12:28,29

Evaluate: "Holiness without love incites terror; love without holiness invites libertinism. Worship that focuses on God's transcendence without God's immanence becomes austere and inaccessible; worship that stresses God's immanence without God's transcendence leads to irreverent coziness." (Marva Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down*, Eerdmans, 1995)

2. Martin Luther: "Let solemn awe possess us." CW hymn 574:3

Evaluate: "Lutheran worship balances solemnity and warmth."

Most common word for "worship" in both NT & OT means: _____

3. Is there a human need for transcendence? Psalm 95

4. Nonliturgical churches discover value in liturgy and ritual

5. Suggestions for more meaningful worship coming from people with little or no liturgical background. *From Worship Old and New*, Webber, Zondervan, 1982, p. 194. See also *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail: Why Evangelicals Are Attracted to the Liturgical Church*, Robert Webber, Word, 1985.

#4. Orient worship toward God rather than human beings.

#5. Restore a sense of awe and reverence, mystery and transcendence.

6. Architectural implications

From National Public Radio: January 03, 2001 All Things Considered.

Bricks and Metaphor Commentator Jonathan Kranz is grateful for the decision to save rather than demolish the Romanesque town hall in his home town of Winchester, Massachusetts. He rues the parallel trends of smaller, plainer public spaces and more grandiose private ones and what they say about our lives and communities.

Private spaces becoming larger, public smaller (cathedrals, railway stations, libraries)

"Worst of all, churches have been stripped of mystery. Medieval cathedrals seemed touched by the hand of God. Today's houses of worship seem designed by the same hands that build college dining halls or DMV waiting areas. Meanwhile, private houses have swelled to absurd proportions. Kitchens now have cathedral ceilings. The simple bedroom has become a master suite. Former clothes closets are walk-in fashion runways."

<http://www.npr.org/ramfiles/atc/20010103.atc.05.ram>

B. Main locations of worship action: Word, Baptism, Communion ... and: Praise, prayer, participation

1. Review: actor and audience
2. "Sing to the Lord..." – common encouragement in the Psalms.
3. Ephesians 5:19-20 & Colossians 3:16
4. Location of musical sources: organ, choir, solo, children, handbells: should not interfere with or obstruct visual focus on primary symbols—God's gifts.
5. Acoustics

Excerpts from "A Lament for Resounding Praise," by Carl Schalk

Congregational song is in serious trouble. It is being strangled by the good, though often ill-informed intentions of some architects, pastors, church building committees and church musicians who simply haven't done their homework. Having literally been sold a bill of goods by church furnishing-houses, architects and others who should know better, many parishes have allowed their church buildings to become surrogate living rooms with wall to wall carpet, cushioned seats and an aura of comfy coziness. Worshiping at the altar of "dry" (i.e., dead) sound, architects and church interior designers continue building and furnishing monuments to lackluster liturgy and stifled song. The symbol of the movement: the padded pew. Its marching song: "Sit Down, O People of God." The result, of course, is an abominable acoustical environment. In church after church, the song of the faithful, in fact, the total sound of worship, is muted and hushed, the victim of an environment that inhibits and represses, that stifles and suppresses the best efforts of congregations to lift up their voices as one in praise and adoration..... *Christian Century, March 23-30, 1983*

6. Seating patterns

C. Fellowship with fellow believers

1. Hebrews 10:25
2. Gathering space
3. Hospitable place
4. Flexible space?

D. Conclusion: Focus

1. Focus on chief symbols
 - a) CW 532:2, "Here are symbols to remind us of our lifelong need of grace. / Here are table, font, and pulpit; here the cross has central place...."
 - b) CW 541:3, "In these last days of sore distress / Grant us, dear Lord, true steadfastness That pure we keep, till life is spent, / Your holy Word and sacrament.
 - c) Focus by means of floor treatment
 - d) And what else is here?
2. Focus and adequate, uncluttered space
3. Focus and Color
4. Focus on Christ

E. Miscellaneous

1. Richer worship life, or confusing changes?
2. Priorities, stewardship, and expense
3. Spiritual priorities do not exclude glorious churches (or pipe organs)
4. Flags? Better located in fellowship hall or entry way; not in chancel