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**ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND SPIRITUAL LIFE:
ILLUSTRATION AND PARALLELS**

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I . INTRODUCTION

Architectural design generally consists of 7 basic design elements and 7 basic design principles. These elements and principles are used to design beautiful and useful buildings if they are reasonably combined together by a master architect. We call it architecture. Like architecture, our spiritual life is also composed of similar elements and principles. If appropriate elements and principles, which have significant spiritual meanings, are combined according to the structure given by the heavenly Architect, a wonderful character can be seen and we may call it architecture of the soul. As a well-designed building is beautiful, useful and solid so that it might be loved by people, beautiful architecture of the soul is charming, healthy and helpful to others so that it will be "in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

II . SEVEN ELEMENTS OF SPIRITUAL DESIGN

(1) FROM POINT TO FORM

Every composition possessing unity should have ONE and only one focal point. This does not imply that there cannot be more than one point of interest in the composition to arrest the attention, but rather that there should be only one focal point, or center of interest where the eye finally comes to rest. In a successfully balanced architectural composition, the focal point should ordinarily be the most interesting and important point in the design. The same is true in our spiritual lives. A spiritual focal point, which gives tension and attraction to our empty and void human life, is needed. Jesus, way and the truth and the life (John 14:6) must be the only focal point in our Christian lives.

Every composition starts from one point. Points make a line, which is called one dimension by moving in a certain direction. Lines can be composed of a two dimensional plane in the same way and planes also can be three-dimensional by moving in a certain direction. So most architectural structures are not built at the same time but gradually built from very basic elements. We may find the same application in the spiritual life. The basic spiritual elements are necessary to form a beautiful Christian character. What is the most basic element in the beginning of the spiritual life? It is definitely the Word of God. In the Bible, the Word of God is described as a seed as Jesus explained in the parable of the mustard seed. "The kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."(Matt 13:31) Although a point as small as a mustard seed has no dimension at all but it will grow up to the heavenly dimension in the life of the believer. It has power to produce life and growth and fruit in the soul. Sometimes we try to meet people with brilliant form like philosophy and psychology and entertainment and all kinds of things. Sometimes we think our students need entertainment or gimmicks to keep their attention. Maybe we need to remember the power that is in the Word of God, that "lives and abide forever."

(2) DIRECTION

Architecture has various directions, which are vertical, horizontal and oblique. These directions are decided according to the character of buildings and the types of structure. The vertical direction is emphasized for holiness and authority, the horizontal direction represents stability and peacefulness, and the oblique direction shows dynamics and variation. The architectural designer regards direction as a very important element not only because of aesthetic reasons but also because of functional and environmental reasons. The facade of a building is related to symbolism, and directions of important rooms are related to direction of sunlight and they must have a good prospect. The direction of winds is also taken into consideration for the windows.

As completed buildings are related to directions, our Christian lives need to have its direction toward Christ who is the sun of righteousness. Jesus said, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the spirit." (John 3:8) We need to have big windows in the direction from where the Holy Spirit comes so that we may let Him inside of our spiritual houses as deeply as possible. When we fix our eyes on Savior, we can have the symbolism as ambassadors of God's kingdom.

As Christians, we have to have vertical direction toward the heaven that we are all longing for. But also we need to have the horizontal direction for our fellow man with open arms and hearts. Sometimes we might have the oblique direction that is able to overcome high walls of Christian formalism.

The definition of wandering is to lose direction. The Bible shows us the wandering of the Israelites. "The Lord's anger burned against Israel and he made them wander in the desert forty years, until the whole generation of those who had done evil in his sight was gone." Israel did not wander in the desert due to losing a mechanical compass but because of losing the spiritual compass that it may lead them toward God. Without Jesus, the compass of life, we are going to be wandering in the spiritual desert. The believer's character is formed by the Word of God but the character does not stay in one place. It moves forward like the apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:14,15. "Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Let us have the direction in our Christian lives.

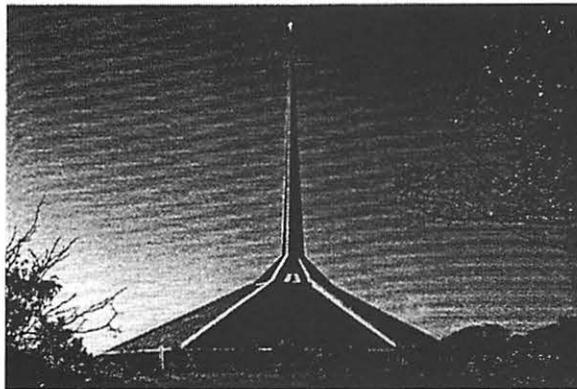


Fig. 1 Direction

(3) SCALE

Architects use the word "scale" very often. They say, "It is on a huge scale." or "It is reasonable and harmonized scale." or "It is too small for the scale." The design of a building needs scale that it is proper to its feature, function and environment. Last month, I saw the biggest Buddhist temple in the Orient. As soon as I saw it I was disappointed and regretted coming because it was out of scale. The main building was bigger than the garden and surrounding open spaces. Can we imagine the statue of a little kid that is three times bigger than usual? The characteristics of things sometimes depend on their scale. So when they lost their quantities like size and scale they will lose their qualities too.

Every Christian should have appropriate scale in their lives. Sometimes, the scale of a Christian can be seen as temperance. The Apostle Paul said, "Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown." (1Corinthians 9:25) On the other hand, the Christian scale must also cover the wide range of social needs. As God provides food for the young raven (Job 38:41), we have to have a very detailed view for the needs of children, family, neighbors and the poor. As He does great things beyond our understanding (Job 37:5), we also have vast, huge and broad scale that it is open to the whole world and universe and even to eternity. As Christians, we should always try to find out the most reasonable scale in our spiritual lives individually. "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you." (Romans 12:3)



Fig. 2 Scale

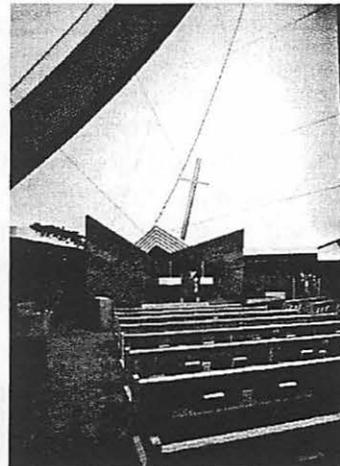


Fig. 3 Texture

(4) TEXTURE

We are able to feel the state of surface not by touching the object but by just watching. That perception may be called texture. The architect designs the appearance of a building with certain intention to the texture. Each building has various kinds of texture, warm and cold, light and heavy, soft and hard, dull and sharp, natural and artificial so on. What kind of texture do we need in the Christian life? The prophetic

book gives us an answer. "Jesus was the fountain of healing mercy for the world; His life flowed out in currents of sympathy and tenderness. The aged, the sorrowing, and the sin-burdened, the children at play in their innocent joy, the little creatures of the groves, the patient beasts of burden,— all were happier for His presence."(The Desire of ages p.74)

Jesus took the texture of humanity and became our example. Every Christian who follows Christ's example may claim those words, "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight." (Isaiah 42:1)

(5) VALUE

Value is used continually throughout discussions of all the visual arts. It refers to different degrees of light and dark, or the quality that is sometimes called tone. It is very important that the architect have complete mastery of the implications of light and value.

It was God who made value through light and darkness for the first time in our universe. "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness." (Gen 3:3,4)

The use of values of either natural or artificial light to express the undulations of surface form is becoming more understood. Through the play of light and shade alone, it is possible to effect great changes in the aspect of a simple plane surface. In the same way, when the heavenly light shines upon surfaces of our spiritual lives, undulations of the surface of our souls such as wrinkles, spots, faults and cracks will get much more clear understanding. When the Christian life receives the light of Christ each and everyday, his life will be totally separated from the darkness like in the beginning and it will reflect the character of our Savior.



Fig. 4 Value

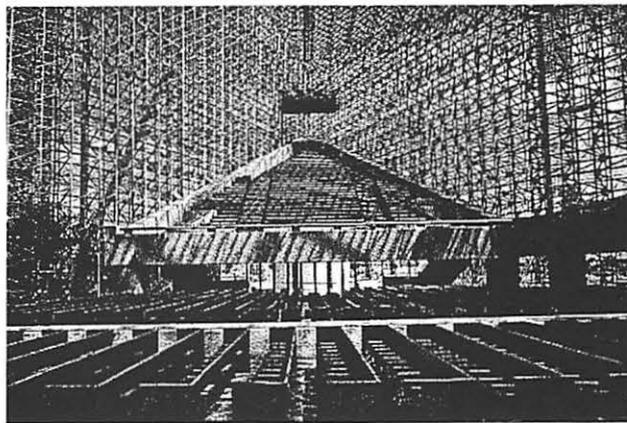


Fig. 5 Space

(6) COLOR

The sensation of seeing color is the effect produced upon the retina of the eye by the waves of different length found in light. It should also be understood that the colors that one sees are produced by what physicists call selective reflection. Various pigments or materials possess different properties of reflecting the same light rays falling upon them. This is selective reflection. Thus it is that a wall painted yellow is actually painted a pigment that chiefly reflects the yellow rays of the spectrum, and we call it a yellow wall. In the same way, as Christians, we should have the pigment of Christ so that we might reflect the heavenly rays of the God's spectrum. Then we can be the color of Jesus.

(7) SPACE

Laotzu, the Chinese ancient philosopher said, "The finest thing has no shape." Laotzu's idea of formation is heavily concerned with emptiness or non-existence. To him who regards nothing as persistent, what is essentially important in things is the possibility of it becoming something, not the opportunity of remaining as something confronting deterioration. Consequently, meaningful completion is taken as the most desirable stage of tangible being.

Practically, what are useful in architecture are not visible parts but the invisible parts of it. These invisible parts accommodate the whole function and various behaviors in the building. It is like what faith does in our hearts. The Bible describes faith as an invisible thing through which we may have hope for what we expect.

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was made out of what was visible." (Hebrews 11:1-3) As if the architecture as space is invisible but it contains usefulness in the invisible, the architecture of soul should take down the anchor for the soul (Hebrews 6:19) not in the visible but in the invisible values.

A complete one appears static, rigid and lacks vividness because it allows no room for the growing mind to function. If we are too complete, we cannot have any room for others and there is no way they can approach us. So first we empty our heart and then we should fill it with the Spirit of Christ so that we will be the bowl that God can fill with treasures of heaven.

III. SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL DESIGN

(1) UNITY

Unity holds perhaps the highest place in any form of composition, because without unity or oneness there actually can be no composition. Without unity there is no order and a composition breaks down into separate and unrelated entities. In architecture, painting, or sculpture, unity produces a single pleasing visual image.

In the spiritual world, unity can be found in God who has internal plurality. There is no interval in the Trinity of God, which has perfect unity as divinity. God created man in his own image. So being human is an existence that has unity as its essence. The Bible describes a human being as total organic unity. It says "May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Bible tells us that we have triple united body that will be sanctified through and through in the time of Jesus second coming.

The life of a Christian needs spiritual unity. The first thing is unity with God. "Who does not love does not know God, because God is love." (1 John 4:8) And it continues to say, "Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." (1 John 4:11) The second is unity with fellow Christians. The highest perfection of human unity is shown in Galatians 3:28. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." God's power is reveals unity when "all the believers were one in heart and mind." (Acts 4:32)

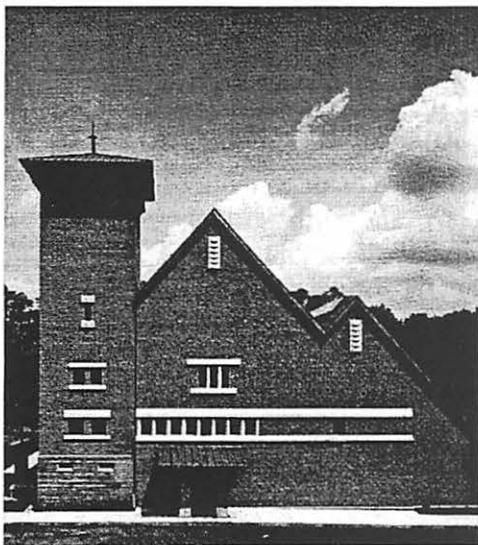


Fig. 6 Unity



Fig. 7 Harmony

(2) HARMONY

Harmony is the aesthetical phenomenon, which occurs between two or more elements and particles. The original meaning of harmony includes appropriation. It was the

principle that God used in the creation of the universe. "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." (Genesis 1:31)

So we may find harmony in nature such as the solar system, the circulation of the ecosystem and symbiotic relationships. Also we have many examples of harmony in our society like family relationship, neighbors, team design etc. As the principle of harmony was applied in the creation of this earth, it must be applied in the recreation of Christian believers in the same way. Christians should be in harmony with God, it is impossible to have harmony with God without the work of the Holy Spirit. When we are harmonized with God's character we also may have harmony with our fellow Christians. As we are approaching Jesus, we are able to closer to each other. Harmony with God, harmony with church, harmony with fellows, harmony with the society in which we are living and harmony with nature, these are all connected. The Scripture says, "Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited." (Romans 12:16) And the Apostle continues to say "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." (Romans 12:18)

(3) CONTRAST

The concept of contrast can come out when two or more totally different properties or quantities are compared with each other in the same space and time. It occurs in the application of various elements in the architectural composition such as direction, scale, value, texture, color, location, weight and space etc. The purpose of contrast is not the simple juxtaposition or mere comparison but the ultimate purpose is to create harmony between two or more elements. It is more difficult to create harmony in contrast than in similarity but the first one gives stronger and more impressive effects on the composition.

Spiritually, we have to agree with the idea that there are big differences between the Creator and His creatures. It is the first step that we come to God. The Prophet Isaiah refers to this, "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways and thoughts above yours. (Isaiah 55:9)" "I form the light and create darkness. I bring prosperity and create disaster." A Christian doesn't always go through the bright side of life. Sometimes we have to overcome circumstances and realities, which are in big, contrast.

Philippians 4:12 said, I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. By the grace of God, Christians can have the ability to synthesize various conflicts in life and can change them into beautiful contrasts. God is a God of contrasts. Because He said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End." (Rev 22:13) God is a God of love and a God of justice. In the same way, the spiritual life can never consist of unity or harmony alone. As Christians we have to learn how to live a harmonized life in the midst of severe contrasts in life conditions.

(4) PROPORTION

Proportion means a constant volume relationship between entity and parts or one part and the other. But definition, proportion can be applied in a wide range of various domains. Generally, proportion has been used in architecture and decoration from ancient time. It has been applied in detail to design doors, windows, height or width of building elevation, width or depth of floor plan and compositions of open space. We can find many examples of good proportion in our surroundings such as the seeds of a sunflower, a turban shell, various kinds of fishes, the shapes of plants, animal and human bodies. The Great Architect and Designer used the same principles to create the universe. The same principle have been adopted by human artists in their works, painting, sculpture, ballet, design, architecture of western and oriental countries.

In our spiritual lives, we need reasonable proportion. We need to give the whole tithes that must be given to God in every part of our lives according to a constant and reasonable proportion. To maintain the balance of our lives we should set apart some proportion from our time, money, talent and activities etc. Jesus said to his disciples, "Come ye yourselves apart in to a desert place, and rest awhile." (Desire of Ages p.360) Because the disciples needed to come apart from the scenes of their busy activity, to commune with Christ, with nature, and with their own hearts. Jesus knew that his disciples needed spiritual proportion in their lives.

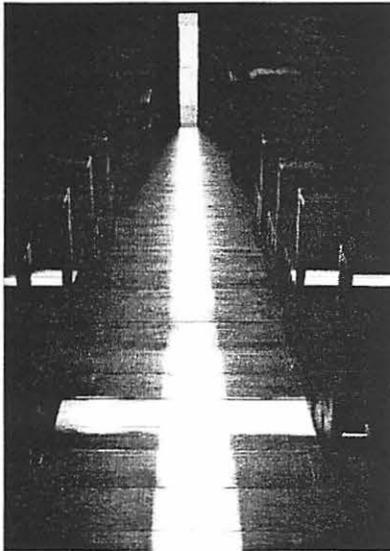


Fig. 8 Contrast

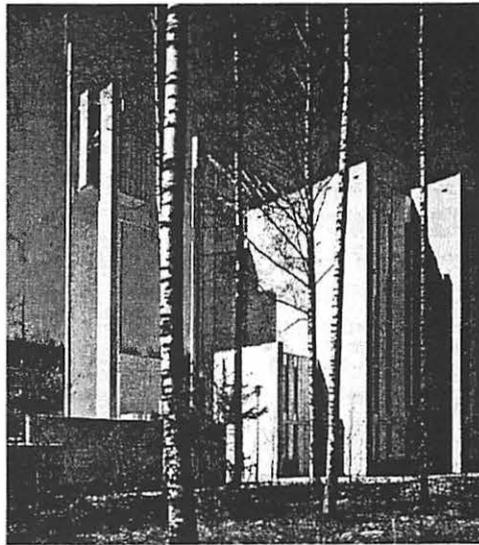


Fig. 9 Proportion

(5) RHYTHM

Rhythm is systematic repetition of relative elements. It appears as repetition, alternation, gradation and accent that have the form of visual stimulation. Rhythm can be experienced in many parts of nature and our culture. We enjoy the rhythm of sunrise and sunset everyday, full moon and new moon every month. Four seasons, flowers blooming, childbirth, sea tides, these are all rhythms, which give us joy and happiness.

All kinds of arts, painting, sculpture, literature, dancing, music, architecture have beautiful rhythm in themselves.

Rhythm is really an inevitable principle in every type of art.

As rhythm makes arts beautiful and dynamic, spiritual rhythm encourages the spiritual state of believer. It is an indispensable and essential principle in Christian life. Repetition of God's word through daily devotion gives spiritual richness to believers. It is the strongest way to have a relationship with God. By devotional repetition everyday, it leads a believer to spiritual gradation. The sinful nature will be gradually hid and a desire for goodness will gradually increase. Through this process, Christian believers can experience justification and sanctification in their lives.

Rhythm makes design beautiful and spiritual rhythm makes Christian life meaningful so that they might be glorified when Jesus comes.

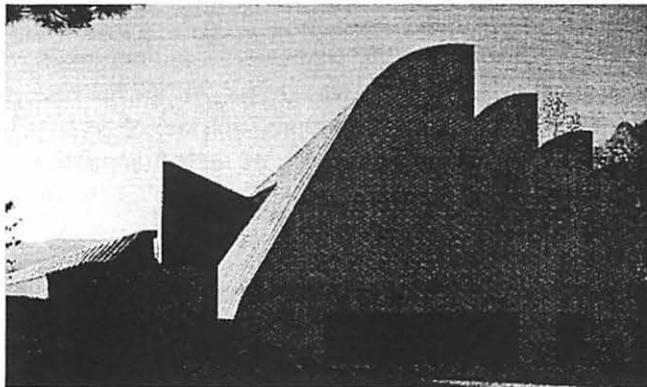


Fig. 10 Rhythm



Fig. 11 Balance

(6) BALANCE

Balance is a stabilizing influence. In its most simple form, balance is symmetry. Thus it is logical that man's earliest attempts at aesthetic architectural compositions were symmetrical. It is easy to see that balance could also be achieved by placing objects, different in mass and character, on the opposite side of the scale and if these opposing objects were of the same weight a condition of balance would exist. We may call it asymmetrical balance. When these types of balance are applied to a composition, the first will result in a static condition of repose, while the second will be more dynamic.

We, as Christians, have to live balanced lives as God said to Joshua son of Nun. "Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left." (Joshua 1:7)

Christ demands us balanced devotion whether we are rich or poor. The believer should take balance between faith and deeds in their lives. It is as same as God himself balances mercy and justice. The Christian should own a balance between the meaningful life in this world and the hope for the coming world. Jesus said, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." (Matthew 3:15) This will be accomplished by spiritual balance. We may find a metaphor of a rock in the book of Deuteronomy. It describes the balance of God who has the extreme stability and trustworthiness of a rock. It says, "He is the rock, his works are perfect, and all his

way are just." (Deuteronomy 32:4) The poet of Israel sings, "He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity." (Psalms 98:9)

(7) VISUAL ILLUSION

Human visual perception does not work like a camera, which records the object simply and passively or mechanically, but it finds the meaning and relationship, which exists in the object and composes a structure of the object. It is one of the high and creative human activities. Man's visual perception always receives the object as if it has stable characteristic. So we may call it continuity. But sometimes this continuity produces an opposite effect that is called visual illusion or distortion. The visual illusion means a phenomenon of distortion, which gives a different image than the real. So we need to correct the distortion in our perception.

In the same perspective, our spiritual perception can be easily distorted by visual illusion such as social position, wealth and appearance. "God does not judge by external appearance." (Galatians 2:6) Our surroundings are decorated with many elements that can distort our judgment. Especially Christian believers have to notice not to be deceived by such visual illusions. We do not have to depend on our senses but depend on God and His wisdom. The book of James says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, we should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will given to him." (James 1:5)

IV. CONCLUSIONS

To have mature faith is not easy. It needs a process to produce the results. Through this essay, seven elements and seven principles of architecture are useful tools to examine mature faith in the Christian life. As good architectural design consists of various elements and principles, in the same way, the spiritual elements and principles in the balance are found in a good spiritual life.

To summarize, they are:

No	Seven Elements	Seven Principles
1	God's Word must be the focal point	Unite the aspects of life
2	Determine the direction of the life	Live the Christian life in harmony
3	Maintain appropriate spiritual scale	Overcome the contrast situations
4	Have texture as a Christian	Have the appropriate faith proportion
5	Be illuminated by heavenly light	Let the rhythm change your character
6	Reflect the color of Jesus	Maintain the balance of the Christian life
7	Insure space for the word of God	Correct the visual illusion with God' help

I hope these seven elements and seven principles encourage us in our spiritual lives so that the Lord creates in us pure hearts and renews steadfast spirits within us. At the end of the process, eventually we will be beautiful architectural structures that God is pleased with what he sees.

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