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Sunggu Yang

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**With Jørn Utzon:
Approaching and Preaching Architectural Texts**
Sunggu A. Yang
Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries
College of Christian Studies, George Fox University

Abstract: *Architecture is communication. It conveys human stories, feelings, philosophies, and cultural histories and interacts through them with viewers, occupants, artists, and surrounding communities. Architecture, whether explicitly religious or not, is spiritual, too. Embodying and manifesting spatial spirituality, it invokes in the mind of the appreciator awe, wonder, and contact with the transcendent. All this is possible because architecture is, to borrow Paul Tillich’s language, an art form carrying the ultimate concerns of human life. Recognizing the communicative, spiritual, and existential nature of architecture exemplified in Jørn Utzon’s Sydney Opera House, this article meets a need and demonstrates the potential for architectural preaching. Preaching can serve biblical texts efficiently—particularly architectural ones (e.g., Exodus 26 and Revelation 21)—by approaching them through an architectural hermeneutic and creatively presenting them with architectural imagination.*

Approaching Architectural Texts for Preaching

*For [Abraham] looked forward to the city that has foundations,
whose architect and builder is God.*
— Hebrews 11:10

*...a text is not a line of words releasing a single “theological” meaning
(the “message” of the Author-God) but a multidimensional space.*
— Ronald Barthes¹

The Bible contains many architectural texts, recognized both literally and figuratively.² In either case, such texts speak about specific architecture or use explicit architectural imagination. For instance, in Exodus 26, YHWH God instructs Moses to build the tabernacle with meticulous details. The first portion of it reads as following: ...

Moreover you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twisted linen, and blue, purple, and crimson yarns; you shall make them with cherubim skillfully worked into them. The length of each curtain shall be twenty-eight cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits; all the curtains shall be of the same size. Five curtains shall be joined to one another; and the other five curtains shall be joined to one another. You shall make loops of blue on the edge of the outermost curtain in the first set; and likewise you shall make loops on the edge of the outermost curtain in the second set. You shall make fifty loops on the one curtain, and you shall make fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is

¹ Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 146.

² Exemplar texts include, but are not limited to, Gen 11:4, Gen 6:14–16, Deut 22:8, Josh 8:31, 1 Kgs 6:1–10, 2 Chr 3:1–17, Ezra 3:7–13, Neh 3, Ps 118:22, Prov 24:3–4, Isa 54:11–12, Jer 22:13–14, Ezek 42:1–20, Ezek 43:10–17, Matt 21:42, Luke 6:48–49, 1 Cor 3:10–13, Eph 2:19–22, Heb 11:10, and Rev 21:9–22.

in the second set; the loops shall be opposite one another. You shall make fifty clasps of gold, and join the curtains to one another with the clasps, so that the tabernacle may be one whole (vv. 1–6).

Then, in 1 Chronicles 3, we meet Solomon who is beginning to build “the house of the LORD.” It records:

Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had designated, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. He began to build on the second day of the second month of the fourth year of his reign. These are Solomon’s measurements for building the house of God: the length, in cubits of the old standard, was sixty cubits, and the width twenty cubits. The vestibule in front of the nave of the house was twenty cubits long, across the width of the house; and its height was one hundred twenty cubits. He overlaid it on the inside with pure gold (vv. 1–4).

The above texts are architectural in a literal sense, but there are a good number of figurative ones in the Bible, like this one found in Revelation:

I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life (Rev 21:22–27).

Recognizing the presence of these and many other architectural texts in the Bible, my primary homiletic concern in this essay is how to best serve these texts by preaching them in a way that can maximize their architectural-literary qualities, or what I will call architectural spirituality. If we agree with Thomas Long, who contends that “the literary form and dynamics of a biblical text can and *should be* important factors” in constructing the sermonic message,³ we should give our keen attention to the architectural-literary form, character, and dynamics of those texts. For Long, this is not only a simple matter of matching the sermon’s communicative mode with that of the text (so that the sermon may sound more like its associated text, which should in any case not be ignored), but more importantly a matter of serving the meaning of the text more faithfully and in a proper hermeneutical sense. Partnering with biblical scholars,⁴ Long explains that the literary form of the text itself *is* the content of the text or at least a key part of the text’s

³ Thomas G. Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1996), 11. Italics inserted.

⁴ For detailed discussions on the literary nature of the Bible, see Dominic Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973); Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985); Stephen Prickett, *Words and the Word: Language, Poetics and Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); David Jasper, *The New Testament and the Literary Imagination* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities: 1986); and Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, eds., *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

meaning.⁵ Therefore, we should be diligent and faithful in discerning the literary form of the text and adopting it into the construction of the sermon message, so the message aligns rightly with the text's meaning.⁶ For the purpose of my essay, the fact that this kind of homiletic application is possible invites the preacher's architectural-literary reading of architectural texts (i.e., an architectural hermeneutic) and the adoption of their unique form, character, and dynamics into sermon construction.

This architectural-homiletic proposal is buttressed by one crucial character of architecture itself, namely that *architecture is communication*. Architecture tells stories, German architect Ole Scheeren notes.⁷ And the stories are about humanity sharing the ultimate values of life—love, hope, faith, justice, loyalty, sincerity, honesty, peace, reconciliation, forgiveness, and more, including yearning for eternity (e.g., Gothic buildings⁸). Architecture always communicates these humane values and ethereal seeking through its shape, color, space, and materials. This makes the stories that architecture tells sacred.⁹ In this sense, architecture is not far from preaching, in that the latter is fundamentally about the same aforementioned values of life, embedded with biblical and theological inputs. Therefore, it would be not an exaggeration to consider architecture an analogous form of preaching. Architecture can convey theology and it can speak theology into human hearts in the form of sacred story.¹⁰

In sum, it is not surprising that there is a great potential for communicative and spiritual collaboration between architecture and preaching (and, indeed, a need for it due to the large lack of architectural preaching¹¹). That is, architectural preaching is possible and should be

⁵ Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms*, 12-17.

⁶ In a similar sense, homileticians like William Willimon have already found that the “[sermon] form itself is the content.” Conjoining this argument (i.e., sermon form as the content) with Long’s (i.e., literary form of the text as the text’s meaning), we can securely claim that the sermon form should match the literary form of the text in order for the sermon to reflect the text’s meaning as truthfully as possible.

⁷ Scheeren further articulates, “So I believe that architecture exceeds the domain of physical matter, of the built environment, but is really about how we want to live our lives, how we script our own stories and those of others.” Ole Scheeren, “Why Great Architecture Should Tell a Story,” accessed July 4, 2020, https://www.ted.com/talks/ole_scheeren_why_great_architecture_should_tell_a_story#t-39126.

⁸ Any fine Gothic cathedral is an utmost expression of corporeal beings seeking contact with the transcendent.

⁹ Obviously, architectural storytelling is neither verbal nor written. It is more about spatial storytelling. Simply put, space tells a story. Spatial storytelling is multifaceted. Spatial storytelling involves 1) the life, philosophy, and unique design of the architect, 2) the peculiar shape, color, space, and materials of the architecture that spark the unlimited imagination of the viewer or the occupant, 3) the spatial impression upon visitors of the architecture (which could go beyond the original intention of the architect), 4) various utilitarian usages of the architecture by people or residents if the building is for residency, 5) the historical and cultural influence and imprint of the architecture indelibly engraved on its surroundings, and finally, 6) the encounter with the sacred or transcendent that the architecture invokes. All these stories live together in one architecture and generate the profound meaning—cultural, social, political, and spiritual—of the given space.

¹⁰ Denis R. McNamara insightfully states, “Architecture is the built form of ideas, and church architecture is the built form of theology.” I would like to push McNamara’s insight a bit further, insisting that architecture in general—not only church architecture—conveys in itself a potential to demonstrate theology. Denis R. McNamara, *Catholic Church Architecture and the Spirit of the Liturgy* (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2009), 3.

¹¹ I have found that architectural preaching, or more generally preaching on (overtly) architectural texts, is very rare. Above all, the Revised Common Lectionary does not include many architectural texts, such as Exod 26:1–6, 1 Chr 3:1–4, Ezek 42:1–20, and Rev 21:22–27. In the cases of sermons preached on architectural texts, they seldom deal with architectural specifics or aspects of the texts. Rather, sermons tend to *extract* mostly abstract theological or spiritual meanings from the texts. For instance, a couple of sermons on Rev 21:1–6 found on Day 1 (www.day1.org) hardly touch on the architectural form, character, and dynamics of the text. The sermons are excellent as they stand, but the messages or meanings of the sermons could be more aligned with the text’s unique dynamics and ethos (which Long and others would cheerfully root for) if the sermons were more architecturally oriented.

welcomed. Again, there are numerous passages carrying architectural references throughout the Bible that invite architecture-sensitive homiletical discourses (note that we are limiting the scope of the discussion to preaching on architectural texts only). Although perhaps a new consideration, this architectural approach should feel familiar and even essential, as architectural awareness is almost universal to most living human beings, for without exception we all inhabit architectural space every day for living, leisure, or work. Furthermore, certain architectural entities are specifically for religious use (e.g., cathedrals, churches, temples, etc.), which easily enables us to acknowledge the spiritual dimension of architecture.

What I present below is the collaborative potential between architecture and preaching. My architectural homiletic case is built from a foundational aesthetic and hermeneutical exploration of the Sydney Opera House (the House, hereafter), which was designed by Danish architect Jørn Utzon. The House is one good instance of architecture telling and embodying multiple, meaningful human stories and invoking the transcendent. After building further on the aesthetic, spiritual, and hermeneutical aspects of architecture, I will propose one creative way of constructing architectural sermons on architectural texts, based on Rev 21:1–4, 9–14, 22–27.

Wonders of the House

*[The House is] an image of great beauty...
a symbol for not only a city, but a whole country and continent.
— The Pritzker Prize Jury Citation, 2003¹²*

The architectural wonders and beauty of the House has captured people's hearts and imagination ever since its completion in 1973. Therefore, it was no surprise when Utzon, the primary architect, won the prestigious Pritzker Prize in 2003 (while he was still alive, which has happened only twice in history). Eventually, the House was named a UNESCO world heritage site in 2006. More than eight million people from around the world visit the House each year.

The alluring wonders of the House are at least fourfold. The first wonder comes from a seeming architectural impossibility made possible: the House's peculiar structure or shape, along with the transcendental nuance it generates. The three-dimensional, gigantic shell roof (or roofs made of shell-type panels) was not only one of the most original in architectural history, but one of the hardest to achieve. Utzon and his team spent years on the final design and making the shell roof after the foundational construction had been completed.¹³ After twelve different iterations were considered, including parabolic and ellipsoid methods, finally the so-called "spherical solution" came to light. In an unprecedented trial, they decided to derive the gigantic shell roofs from the surface of a sphere, which solved most of the architectural, mathematical, and financial problems involved:

By any standard it was a beautiful solution to crucial problems: it elevated the architecture beyond a mere style—in this case that of shells—into a more permanent idea, one inherent in the universal geometry of the sphere.¹⁴

¹² The citation is available at <https://www.pritzkerprize.com/laureates/2003> (accessed July 4, 2020).

¹³ For the architectural competition, Utzon only submitted his basic sketch of the House. All the details, including those of the shell roof, came along later as the construction moved on. It took six years to lay down the podium or foundation, after which the roof was made (1957–1963).

¹⁴ Sydney Opera House homepage, "The Spherical Solution," accessed July 4, 2020, <https://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/our-story/sydney-opera-house-history/spherical-solution.html>.

The universal nature of the construction is remarkable and unmistakable throughout the House (that is, viewed from any and all directions), which creates a feel of a miniature cosmos with the blue sea and sky surrounding it.¹⁵ Additionally, the expressionist tone of the House adds a significant architectural spirituality—defined as the presence of and contact with the transcendent sparked by the physical-material building—to the overall impression of the House.¹⁶ It is obvious that the impossible made possible—like creation *ex nihilo*—along with its cosmological-spiritual feel, is a key source of the wonders and transcendental awe of the House. Appropriately, during the opening ceremony Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy” was performed by the full orchestra and choir, which sang:

Joy, beautiful spark of Divinity,
Daughter of Elysium,
We enter, drunk with fire,
Heavenly One, thy sanctuary!

The second wonder comes from the House’s beauty created in *living space*—a space full of natural life. Occupying the whole of Bennelong Point on Sydney Harbor, the House with its shell-shaped patterns is a fitting match for the maritime environment. In the viewer’s mind, the House creates the illusion that it may have erupted deep from the blue sea at some point in natural history. It is an illusion that the House—a product of cold concrete and steel—looks like a living creature, breathing and floating through the seas. Especially, the huge shell-shape roof is powerful enough to suggest that if the House were a living creature, it would still be growing or expanding.¹⁷ Additionally, the tiles covering the shell roofs are designed to contrast with the deep blue of Sydney Harbor and the clear blue of the Australian sky. The tiles are just glossy enough, but do not cause glare.¹⁸ In that way, once again, the House becomes a “living” part of its entire environment. Regarding the House’s lively merging with the nature, American architect

¹⁵ Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa recognizes this general cosmological nature of architecture in saying, “All great artistic works are complete universes and microcosmic representations of the world. They are pieces of magic that manage to contain everything in a singular mental and experiential image.” Juhani Pallasmaa, “Artistic Generosity, Humility and Expression,” in *Theology in Built Environments: Exploring Religion, Architecture, and Design*, ed. Sigurd Bergmann (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2012), 25.

¹⁶ For Paul Tillich, expressionist arts can be considered religious arts even when their overt themes are not religious. This is mainly because, he thought, art with such particular styles and motives best manifests the deep concerns of humanity. All may not agree with Tillich’s particular take on expressionism, but it is evident that many expressionist arts from Vincent van Gogh, Paul Cézanne, Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, and others (even though most of them would have hesitated to label themselves as expressionists) engage with what is happening deep in human psychology. Paul Tillich, *On Art and Architecture*, eds. Jane Dillenberger and John Dillenberger (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 127–38.

¹⁷ Utzon himself coined the term *additive architecture* for this kind of natural, life-reflecting construction. In an essay titled, “The Innermost Being of Architecture,” he states, “Something of the naturalness found in the growth principle in nature ought to be a fundamental idea in works of architecture.” Jørn Utzon, *Jørn Utzon Logbook Vol. V*, (Hellerup [Denmark]: Edition Bløndal, 2009), 6.

¹⁸ For this effect, Utzon created unique tiles, now called the Sydney Tile, mimicking the texture of Japanese ceramic bowls that demonstrate a subtle coarseness caused by a granular texture in the clay from a small percentage of crushed stone. In total, 1,056,006 tiles were placed on the entire roof. For more information, visit <https://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/our-story/sydney-opera-house-history/spherical-solution.html> (accessed July 4, 2020).

Louis Kahn once commented, “The sun did not know how beautiful its light was, until it was reflected off this building.”¹⁹

Third, the House’s dynamic interaction with the human viewer or the House user (or the artistic performer) is the culmination of its wonders and awe. Not only does the House boast harmony with the nature that surrounds it, also it mutually exchanges emotive and intellectual impressions or expressions with inspired viewers. In other words, moved and motivated by the splendor of the House, viewers or the House users contribute significantly to the life and beauty of the House in return. Cristina Garduno Freeman articulates how this has happened throughout past decades:

The manifestation of the story of this building in the form of a book, a collaborative web page, an opera and a guided tour indicates that the practice of telling, and by extension all the practices identified in the schema set out there, are not limited to specific forms of culture, or individuals, groups, commercial organizations or institutions...together they offer a new way of understanding the iconic value and cultural significance of the Sydney Opera House.²⁰

In an architecturally technical sense, this dynamic interaction between the House and its users is boosted largely by the multiple performance venues that the House offers. The House is not just for traditional opera as the House’s formal name (The “Opera” House) may suggest. The House also hosts plays, musicals, dance, comedy, classical music, films, the circus, magic shows, cabaret, and much more (e.g., engagement and wedding ceremonies). Altogether, more than three thousand performances take place throughout the year, attended by many of its eight million annual visitors. Thus, the House as a physical structure alone—however grand it may be—is not the only generator of the zestful life around it. Rather, the people and the live artistic performances in the House greatly promote the spirited life and beauty of the House. Thus, tributes to the House, such as the following, are not surprising:

My wife and I were married and held our reception at the Opera House, so many years ago...My soul as others has found a place to sing in this magical space...My father worked on the building.²¹

Last but not least, the House can be approached from all directions, which allows for the viewer’s autonomous appreciation and interaction with it. Around the House, there is no definitive front, back, or dividing walls, even though there is an “official” entrance. One can simply stand or sit on any place around the House and enjoy the harbor view, the blue sky, the House itself, the food court, serene meditation, photography, or outdoor performance art. One can even enjoy the House from the sea via yacht and take pleasure in seeing a different angle of the big shells. One may want to visit the House at different times of the year or day. As the shells are designed to reflect the natural sunlight, one can appreciate different light tones and moods of the shells at different times of the day, especially the ethereal, colorful moments of sunrise and sunset. In that sense, the House kindly invites one’s unique aesthetic interpretation of it, the detailed content of which is widely open-ended and possible from different standpoints and

¹⁹ Quoted in Geraldine Brooks, “Unfinished Business,” *The New Yorker*, October 17, 2005.

²⁰ Cristina Garduno Freeman, *Participatory Culture and the Social Value of an Architectural Icon: Sydney Opera House* (London: Routledge, 2019), 99.

²¹ From writing pieces of Steve McCarthy, Diane McQueen, and Linda Briggs in *Participatory Culture*, 162.

during different times of the year. Basically, one can *own* his or her unique impression, expression, and interpretation of the House.²² All in all, the House is not simply a physical concrete building, but has become what Patrick Dillon calls “a poem” that the appreciator plays with joyfully and is transformed by in a holistic way.²³ Hence, people were happy to leave another set of tributes to Utzon and the House, collected upon his death:

I always feel revived and inspired by sharing the experience in such a wonderful building.
It lifts my spirits and inspires me every single time.
that inevitably lifts the spirit and inspires wonder
The power to move, change and inspire,
masterpiece will continue to inspire great artists, visitors, employees, and residents.²⁴

Spirituality of Space

*...the purpose of sacred architecture is to offer the Church
a fitting space for the celebration of the mysteries.*
— Pope Benedict XVI²⁵

After the Exodus from Egypt, when the Israelites were still curious about YHWH’s identity (Who is this God? How does one worship the I-AM-WHO-I-AM God?), God instructs Moses with “the pattern of the tabernacle and of all its furniture” (Exod 25:9). As a result, the sanctuary is built by artisans as a portable and unique dwelling place of YHWH among the people. Centuries later, per God’s architectural plan and command, David and Solomon build a permanent temple in Jerusalem, for which God gives the Israelites the right to call the temple “the house of the Lord” and “the house of God” (1 Chr 28:20–21). In the New Testament, the infant baby Jesus is presented in the Jerusalem temple according to the customs. Later, the boy Jesus and his family make an annual pilgrimage to the temple for the festival of Passover (Luke 2). In Acts 2, Peter and John go up to the temple for the hour of prayer regularly. In sum, throughout the Bible, people needed and built and sacred spaces for rituals and worship.

Likewise, since the Judeo-Christian era, through the Middle Ages and Modern time and up to the present moment, people go to sacred spaces—be it a synagogue, temple, cathedral, church, gathering place, house church, or more recently, an online, virtual church—to worship

²² Pallasmaa explains how this open-ended appreciation can or should happen in architectural encounter: “Skillfully designed buildings are usually expected to direct and channel the occupant’s experiences, feelings and thoughts. In my view, this attitude is a fundamentally wrong understanding; *architecture offers an open field of possibilities, and it stimulates and emancipates perceptions, associations, feelings, and thoughts. A meaningful building does not argue or propose anything; it inspires us to see, sense and think ourselves.* A great architectural work sharpens our senses, opens our perceptions and makes us receptive to the realities of the world. The reality of the work also inspires us to dream. It helps us to see a fine view of garden, feel the silent persistence of a tree, or the presence of the other, but it does not indoctrinate or bind us” (italics inserted). Pallasmaa, “Artistic Generosity,” 30.

²³ Patrick Dillon with illustrations from Stephen Biesty, *The Story of Buildings: From the Pyramids to the Sydney Opera House and Beyond* (Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2014), 8.

²⁴ These are select lines from numerous tributes to Utzon and the House, quoted anonymously in Freeman, *Participatory Culture*, 165. As the lines appear in a poetic format in the original source, some capitalizations (in that source) are omitted. See the book for many other similar tributes.

²⁵ Available at http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis.html (accessed July 4, 2020).

and indulge in the presence of the Divine. All these attest that we need designated spaces of prayer and worship. Sacred space *matters* in religious life.

Catholic architect and theologian Denis R. McNamara articulates why sacred space matters in the Christian life. For him, “a church is a sacramental building,” which is “meant to be an image of heaven in order to fulfill and express its own nature.”²⁶ The sacramentality of church architecture is made possible largely by its beauty that is “the compelling power of the Truth.”²⁷ He thus concludes unapologetically, “A beautiful church is the very image of heaven itself made known in material form.”²⁸ For him, sacred space really matters. In a Christian church, the revelation of the Divine can happen in that space, the Truth of Christ is delivered through the space, and the transformation of human hearts is possible by dwelling deeply in the space. It would even be safe to state that no truth is revealed or possible without space.

The above example of the House alludes to the possibility of the Divine’s presence or the feel of the transcendent in non-religious architecture, too. The impossible-made-possible nature of the House, and the cosmic symbolism of its shape, color, and material all contribute to the realization of the wonders and mystery of the world, which is not far from the Christian experience of the Divine in the sacred place. If all this spiritual character of the House leads to lifting our spirits and personal inspiration for so many people—that is, “inspiration to be a better person”²⁹—then secular *architecture matters in religious life* as significantly as church buildings.

What is special about architecture as a remarkable spiritual artifact—compared to other art forms—is first its practical and multidimensional experience of the Divine, and second, the Divine’s active interaction with nature and humanity at large. According to American Architect Louis Sullivan’s well-known maxim, “Form ever follows function.”³⁰ Most architecture, if not all, has a practical function or purpose, more or less. For instance, cathedrals are for worship, and the House is for artistic performances or enjoyment. Hence, the Divine encounter in the building can be as much practical as purposeful. In the three-dimensional space, one can practice silent prayer while sitting or standing, surrounded by aesthetically-reflected lights on the walls, or one can walk around the structure in appreciation and gratitude of cosmic beauty and demonstrated creativity, or one may want to sing or dance on the empty floor, deeply involved in the spatial mysteries of the architecture.

The practical aspect of architecture and the potential ritualistic activities in it can lead to significant consideration of the Divine’s *active interaction* with the neighboring natural environment and local communities. No building stands alone. Whether the House or the Neuschwanstein Castle in Germany,³¹ all are surrounded by nature and civil society and interact with them. This essentially means that the architectural-revelatory event of the Divine deeply concerns issues, problems, and well-being of nature and wider human civilization. A fine

²⁶ McNamara, *Catholic Church Architecture*, vii.

²⁷ McNamara, 1–2. McNamara acutely realizes the confusion and suspicion around the term beauty in today’s world. But he still wants to provide and use his carefully coined phenomenological definition of it. “Beauty is,” he states, “nothing less than the revelation of the ontological reality of a thing, the expression in material form of the inner most heart of the very identity of its being.”

²⁸ McNamara, 3.

²⁹ “Inspiration to be a better person” appears as one of notable themes in tributes to Utzon and the House, collected upon his death. Freeman, *Participatory Culture*, 165. Those tributes include, “Jørn Utzon inspired me as a child,” “I am inspired by his creative vision and integrity,” “The power to move, change and inspire,” “[The House] changed so many lives, inspired so many individuals and brought joy and happiness,” and the like.

³⁰ Louis H. Sullivan, “The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered,” *Lippincott's Magazine* (March 1896): 403–09.

³¹ The famous Disney castle is said to be modelled after this German architecture.

example is the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, AL, informally known as the National Lynching Memorial, which was built by Michael Murphy and his team in consultation with Bryan Stevenson, the founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative. In his inspiring TED talk, “Architecture That’s Built to Heal,” Murphy explores the civic and spiritual role that architecture can play in the surrounding community—both locally and nationally—toward transcendental healing and reconciliation.³² In a Tillichian sense, then, architecture can take on ultimate concerns of the human world and the natural environment (e.g., natural preservation³³) and provide wisdom and force that can be utilized for their betterment.³⁴ In that way, it is no exaggeration to say that architecture as an art form and spiritual practice has salvific power.³⁵ We, the appreciators, performers, and architectural builders, should be wise and diligent to use the power of salvation very well.

Toward Architectural Preaching

We now turn to the constructive discussion of architectural preaching. We could tackle many homiletic-theoretical tasks based on the above discussion. But in the present writing only two things will be pondered at length: an architectural hermeneutic and the architectural composition of a sermon.

A. An Architectural Hermeneutic

Five Principles

Before practicing architectural preaching, the preacher should first become an architectural hermeneut or interpreter; that is, the preacher becomes an architect of an imagined sermonic space, who designs from an embedded hermeneutical guide. This sermonic space rises from the preacher’s architectural hermeneutical reading of the scriptural text, especially architectural texts such as Exod 26 and 1 Chr 28. Thus, in her study the preacher will initially explore the architectural text as a sacred space of meanings or transcendental experiences, and later in the sermon guide people into and through the same textual space for similar divine encounters. This architectural reading of the text is possible when: 1) the text’s content itself is architectural, and 2) after the preacher perceives the text as “not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multidimensional space.”³⁶ Simply put, the architectural text itself can be a space of multilayered meanings and divine encounters that invites the preacher’s and the listener’s hermeneutical and transformative “walking.”³⁷

³² Michael Murphy’s TED talk, “Architecture That’s Built to Heal,” accessed July 4, 2020, https://www.ted.com/talks/michael_murphy_architecture_that_s_built_to_heal?language=en#t-919058.

³³ For instance, in their book Donald Watson and Michele Adams discuss the creative architectural design that prevents severe flooding and provides more sustainable, regenerative, and resilient natural and living places. Donald Watson and Michele Adams, *Design for Flooding: Architecture, Landscape, and Urban Design for Resilience to Climate Change* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2013).

³⁴ Tillich, *On Art and Architecture*, 188-89.

³⁵ I agree with J. W. De Gruchy on the salvific power of the arts. De Gruchy contends that truth and goodness alone are not sufficient “to convince and therefore to save,” but that the aesthetical rendering of truth and goodness is required for the full salvific action of the Divine. J. W. De Gruchy, “Holy Beauty: A Reformed Perspective on Aesthetics within a World of Ugly Injustice,” in *Reformed Theology for the Third Christian Millennium*, ed. B. A. Gerrish (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 15.

³⁶ Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, 146.

³⁷ Architecture exactly does this—offers multiple meaning and transformative experiences. See footnote 22.

A structural reading of the text, or structural criticism, may provide an interpretive springboard for the making of the architectural hermeneutic, as the former attempts to dig up the deep or underlying structure of the text upon which the text is “built” like a house.³⁸ Ronald Allen catches the core of structural criticism as the following: “Every text is composed of discrete units, often called ‘lexies.’ A lexie is a single unit of thought or action which makes sense by itself, without reference to other discrete elements. Structural criticism centers on the analysis of the interaction of the lexies which comprise the text.”³⁹

Based on his understanding of structuralism, Allen proposes key questions, responses to which the preacher may utilize as the sermon content and structure:

1. What are the basic units of the text?
2. What is the situation at the beginning of text?
3. What is the situation at the end of the text?
4. What is the basic opposition underlying the text?
5. Do elements of the text evoke larger structures which have a role in the text?
6. What transformations take place as the text moves from beginning to end?
7. How does the underlying opposition and its resolution suggest structure and content for the sermon?⁴⁰

Incorporating the architectural-hermeneutical inquiry with the above questions, we can propose the following five core principles (and their associated interpretive questions) of an architectural, interpretive exploration of the text.

1. Multidimensional-spatial exploration of the text: What are the basic spatial units of the text? Where are the architectural entrance and exit points in the text? What spatial point(s) is(are) at the center?
2. Aesthetic-transcendental exploration of the text: What poetic construction of the text is seen? What are the architectural artistic details of the text? What is the theological or spiritual nature of the transcendental wonder provoked in the architectural composition of the text?
3. Performative-interactional exploration of the text: What are the potential, autonomous, interpretive interactions of the reader with spaces in the text, if in her imagination the reader walks through them? Specifically, what performative reactions could be invoked in those spaces (e.g., kneeling in prayer, raising hands in praise, standing still in meditation, dancing around on the floor, respectfully touching walls, serious visual-observational study of the space, etc.)?⁴¹

³⁸ Ronald J. Allen, *Contemporary Biblical Interpretation for Preaching* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2009), 71–72.

³⁹ Allen, *Contemporary Biblical Interpretation*, 72.

⁴⁰ Allen, *Contemporary Biblical Interpretation*, 76–77. Allen adopts French Structuralist Lévi-Strauss’s concept of binary opposition as a key component of textual, structural interpretation, especially in texts where a mythic character appears as a serious agonist.

⁴¹ Pallasmaa, again in his imaginative language, articulates how architecture could interact with an appreciator, stating, “In addition to an ‘aesthetic withdrawal’ and ‘politeness,’ I have spoken of an ‘architectural courtesy’ referring to the way a sensuous building offers gentle and subconscious gestures for the pleasure of the occupant: a door handle offers itself courteously to the approaching hand, the first step of a stairway appears exactly at the moment you wish to proceed upstairs, and the window is exactly where you wish to look out. The building is in full resonance with your body, movements and desires.” Pallasmaa, “Artistic Generosity,” 31.

4. Exploration of oppositional or binary dimensions of the text: Are there any structural symmetries or oppositions⁴² found in the spatial units of the text? What do the symmetries or oppositions look like? How do they hold themselves together in one text?
5. Eco-interactive exploration of the text: If any, what ecological interactions do the space units of the text have? How do they interact? What purpose do their interactions have in relation to other explorations—multidimensional-spatial, aesthetic-transcendental, performative-interactive, and oppositional or binary—of the text?

An Example

With the five principles, architectural texts can be explored thoroughly or even “physically” because they contain clear, spatial, aesthetic, or performative language or sense. Provided below is an example of the architectural hermeneutical reading of Rev 21:1–4, 9–14, 22–27.⁴³

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

“See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away” (vv. 1–4).

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal. It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites; on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (vv. 9–14).

I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light,

⁴² Most traditional buildings are built based on structural symmetries (e.g., rectangular floor plans of cathedrals). In today’s postmodern era, however, this is not necessarily so. Buildings may have oppositional, ambivalent, or spiral structures, as vividly shown in the examples of *Sydney’s Opera House* (Australia), *Guggenheim Museum Bilbao* (Spain), *The Groninger Museum* (Netherlands), *Turning Torso* (Sweden) and *Dancing House* (Czech).

⁴³ I chose three pericopes from the same chapter for a homiletic purpose. Combined together, they convey strong potential to make one preaching passage, and thus a fine architectural sermon.

and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life (vv. 22–27).

1. Multidimensional-spatial exploration of the text

- Basic spatial units of the text: There are at least five basic spatial units in this text—a high, great mountain where the holy city sits; the holy city of Jerusalem as a whole (a view from the distance), coming down from out of heaven; a high wall with twelve gates; twelve foundations; a quick view of the inside.
- Architectural entrance and exit points in the text: There is no clear entrance or exit point described. However, the text states that there are three gates on each side of four walls.
- What spatial points are at the center? Overall impressions of the holy city from both outside and inside are the two observational gravitation poles of the text. The splendor of the entire city, accompanied by the consoling prophecy from the throne of the Lamb and the glory of the Almighty inside the architecture, capture the entire psychology of John the Seer with tremendous awe and wonder.

2. Aesthetic-transcendental exploration of the text

- Poetic construction of the text: The totality of the passage reads poetically. The impressionist nature of the passage arouses deep emotions and intuitive thoughts in the mind of the reader. The actual poem or singing in vv. 3–4 (“See, the home of God ...”) is an aesthetic gem of the passage.
- Architectural artistic details of the text: The content of vv. 9–14 conveys some—not really precise, however—details of the holy city that have biblical-historical meanings (e.g., “...on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites”), and some in vv. 22–27 as well (i.e., “And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it...Its gates will never be shut by day”).
- Theological or spiritual nature of the transcendental wonder provoked in the architectural composition of the text: The whole text seems to fully correspond to what Finnish architect Alvar Aalto acknowledges regarding architectural idealism: “Architecture has an ulterior motif...the idea of creating paradise. That is the only purpose of our buildings...Every building, every architectural product that is its symbol, is intended to show that we wish to build a paradise on earth for [humanity].”⁴⁴

3. Performative-interactive exploration of the text: Potential autonomous interpretive interactions of the reader with the spaces in focus (any specific performative reactions): A carefully-imagined walk with a sense of *mysterium tremendum et fasinans*⁴⁵ seems sure to happen. Like Isaiah, who was awed and humbled in his own vision (Isaiah 6), John the

⁴⁴ From his lecture at the jubilee meeting of the Southern Sweden Master Builders’ Society in Malmö, 1957, quoted in Göran Schildt, ed., *Alvar Aalto in His Own Words* (Helsinki: Otava Publishing Company, 1997), 215.

⁴⁵ For Otto, *mysterium tremendum et fasinans* refers to the “determinate affective state” of human mind or feeling gripped or stirred by that which is a mystery inexpressible and above all creatures. Otto, *The Idea*, 12–40.

Seer in this passage is in a similar spiritual rapture. The reader is invited to walk with the Seer, first from a distance and then finally inside of the holy city, seeing the full glory and complete purity of God's place. This walk seems to be a pilgrim's destined journey into the promised land.⁴⁶ Walking into the holy city, the pilgrim reader may want to make a verbal confession, like Isaiah shouting out "Woe to me!" because, as the Seer describes, "Nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood."⁴⁷

4. Exploration of oppositional or binary dimensions of the text: Any structural symmetries or oppositions found in the spatial units of the text: A clear-cut symmetry of the entire spatial structure is described; twelve gates around the holy city (three on each direction) and twelve foundations that support the surrounding wall. There is one opposition found at the end of the text, not structural but ethical-spiritual, enhanced by the architectural structure: "But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood..." (v. 27).
5. If any, eco-interactional exploration of the text: There are several interactional references between nature and the holy city. To begin with, the text states that "the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more" because a new heaven and a new earth have been created. The holy city comes out of the new heaven (vv. 1–2). The holy city itself now sits on "a great, high mountain," and has "the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal" (vv. 10–11; see vv. 18–21 for other glittering jewel references). Lastly, the passage notes that "the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb" (v. 23). All these eco-interactional references illustrate or promote the unique and ultimate glory and supremacy of God. God doesn't seem to negate the natural world itself, but rather sublimates all natural elements, which God originally created, into God's perfection. This is affirmed aesthetically and eschatologically in the following chapter (Rev 22:1–5).⁴⁸ To reiterate, there is a new heaven and a new earth in place of the first ones, and there is the radiance of God in place of jewels, and finally the light of God in place of sun and moon. Therefore, a considerable hidden purpose of eco-interactional

⁴⁶ In Hebrews 11, Abraham and Sarah, along with other ancestors of faith, are said to have seen the promised land and welcomed it only from a distance, "admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth." In other words, on earth they journeyed toward their promised land as pilgrims. For Dee Dyas, the Abrahamic story is a strongly symbolic, theological presentation of humanity's lifetime pilgrimage to what God has prepared beyond human history. Dee Dyas, *Pilgrimage in Medieval English Literature, 700–1500* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK; Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2001), 15–16.

⁴⁷ This portion of the text well aligns with what Pallasmaa wants to say regarding the ethical consciousness that architecture evokes. He notes, "I wish to argue firmly that the ethical potential and task of architecture resides in its very capacity to transcend naïve realism and instrumentality, to dream of a better and more sensitive and sensuous world, and to facilitate the emergence of this world in the realm of the real. Architectural reason and sensitivity, sincerity and beauty surely resonates with ethical idealism. Beauty itself evokes the existential core of being and it is a harbinger of eternal life... For aesthetics is the mother of ethics." Pallasmaa, "Artistic Generosity," 34.

⁴⁸ The passage reads, "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever."

references seems to be the demonstration of apotheosis of God’s continued creation or transformation of the cosmos toward God’s ultimate glory.

This artistic-performative exegetical example uses all five principles of architectural-interpretive exploration. For other texts, the preacher may only need to apply 3 or 4 principles for each text’s different configuration. This is fine and acceptable as long as the interpretive exploration is thorough and meaning-generating. Moving forward to sermon composition, a conventional historical-critical study of the text is recommended at this point, (only) after the architectural-aesthetic exploration.⁴⁹ The two combined together will make the encounter and study of the text deeper, more accurate, and full of the Divine mystery.

B. Architectural Composition of the Sermon

The remaining question is: How does one compose a sermon based on the architectural encounter of a passage? As an answer, existing sermon composition methods are not desirable for the proposed architectural preaching. Most of them perceive the sermon construction as a logically-flowing essay composition, from sermon introduction to conclusion, with one central idea or focus as an all-encompassing thread.⁵⁰ These methods—though they have their own great methodological merits for other forms of the sermon—do not consider or allow room for spatial or architectural explorations of the text, which are key in architectural sermon composition. Alyce M. McKenzie’s *Making a Scene in the Pulpit: Vivid Preaching for Visual Listeners* seems to offer a good exit or progressive development from those previous methods. Her method regards each meaning block (typically paragraphs) of the sermon as a “scene,” and thus the sermon moves forward scene by scene, biblical or cultural, imaginatively created by the preacher.⁵¹ In that sense, sermon flow is not literary-linear, but rather pictorial-episodic. Architectural composition of the sermon pushes McKenzie’s method a bit further. Architectural sermon writing considers each meaning block “a space” where each unique, yet interlocking, divine encounter happens. Each sermonic space is patterned after spatial units of the text, which are founded during the architectural interpretive exploration.⁵² For this purpose, architectural

⁴⁹ Elsewhere I insist that the artistic exploration or study of the text be conducted first, before the formal historical-critical exegesis of the text. This order guarantees the text is “speaking to” the reader first, rather than the reader objectifying the text as a literary material to dissect. Sunggu Yang, “Homiletical Aesthetics: A Paradigmatic Proposal for a Holistic Experience of Preaching,” *Theology Today* 73, no. 4 (2017): 364–77; esp., 372. Decades ago, Ronald Allen acknowledged the problem of the conventional homiletic interpretation of the text, stating that “much traditional exegesis is one dimensional. It focuses on the rational element in the text and attempts to answer questions like ‘What did this text mean in its ancient context?’ Even synchronic exegesis tends to be highly analytical and to discuss the text as if it were an inert object of research.” For him “a major purpose of exegesis” is “to let us enter the world of the text on its own terms.” Allen, *Contemporary Biblical Interpretation*, 108.

⁵⁰ For a thorough survey of many different forms or patterns of the sermon, refer to O. Wesley Allen, *Determining the Form: Structures for Preaching* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008) and Ronald James Allen, *Patterns of Preaching: A Sermon Sampler* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2006).

⁵¹ See Alyce M. McKenzie, *Making a Scene in the Pulpit: Vivid Preaching for Visual Listeners* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2018), chap. 2.

⁵² This architectural-homiletic proposal of mine is not totally new, obviously. In the recent past, there have been some precursors in architectural or spatial considerations for preaching to whom I owe greatly for my own construct. Briefly, David Buttrick’s homiletic terminology and strategy (i.e., “moves” and “structures” of the sermon), when applied aptly, would generate a feel of spatial-conscious movement in the mind of the preacher (as well as that of the listener, explicitly or implicitly). Paul Scott Wilson emphasizes filmic movement from “page” to “page” along with the filmic three dimensional-sensory (or “visualizing” in his language) composition of each “page.” Thomas Long

preaching re-conceptualizes the sermonic introduction and conclusion as a sermon “entrance” and sermon “back door” (or “side door”). Thus, through the entirety of the sermon, the preacher and the listener—guided by the preacher—enter together into the sermonic architecture, move through various spaces of meanings and divine encounters, and eventually exit through the back door or side door again to the world where they came from.⁵³

Therefore, proposing a central idea and composing the sermon around it would not be a useful methodological device in architectural preaching. The end goal of architectural preaching is to take the listeners themselves on a guided autonomous walk through the sermonic architecture and indulge their deepest selves into the grandeur matrix of various meanings— theological, spiritual, biblical, cultural, and many other ways.⁵⁴ As a result, the listeners will have a unique encounter with God and thus formulate a unique sermon message *for themselves*, either individually or collectively.

Below is an abbreviated sermon composition outline based on the architectural reading of the text, Rev 21:1–4, 9–14, 22–27.

- Sermon Entrance

Imagine with me that you are standing before and seeing the holy city with John the Seer. What thoughts arise in your mind? What feelings bubble in your hearts and deep psychology? Do you want to step inside the city or are you hesitant to act? In either case, what most prompts you to step inside or hesitate do to so? Well, let’s not think or hesitate too much. For the invitation is wide open, and you seem to be so welcome. At the least, John the Seer is already inside and he’s waving for you to come in!

- Space F (front)⁵⁵

Before going in, let’s take a closer look at the outside of the holy city that John the Seer describes. In your imagination, do you also see what I’m seeing? The magnificent wall, the great twelve gates, and the unfathomable twelve foundations! Yet what most captures my attention are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel inscribed on the gates, and the names of the apostles on the foundations. Those dear names, the faithful ancestors and teachers of Christ—just thinking of their lives, faith journeys, and struggles gives me

calls the summary sentence of the exegeted text or the key sermon topic “focus” as if the preacher looks at the spatial core of the text. Last but not least, Fred B. Craddock encourages preachers to recognize the “depth, and height, and breadth” of biblical texts or stories, and avoids seeing them as “little, old, flat, one-dimensional, simple, clever, tricky, little things.” This multi-dimensional recognition of the text should be reflected in the design and content of the sermon. In a metaphoric or literary sense, all these architectural or spatial approaches to the text and sermon form are beneficial by their own merits. My unique contribution is built upon the useful precedents, the development of straightforward interdisciplinary potential between architecture and preaching, and the more direct use of architectural spirituality, wisdom, and communicative insights in preaching. See David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), chaps. 2–5 and 21–25; Paul Scott Wilson, *The Four Pages of the Sermon: A Guide to Biblical Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 16; Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 126–27; and Fred B. Craddock, *Craddock on the Craft of Preaching*, eds. Lee Sparks and Kathryn Hayes Sparks (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2011), 45.

⁵³ Or we may want to exit through sermon entrance again at the end. In this case, the sermon content may adopt a circular movement.

⁵⁴ Refer to footnote 14 for how this autonomous appreciation and meaning-finding happens in architectural encounter.

⁵⁵ I do not want to use the designation of Space A, B, C, D, E, etc., as they still reflect a sense of literary-linear order, which architectural preaching wants to avoid.

some courage and confidence again to still stand as a Christian in this violent and hungry world. How about you?

- Space R (right)
Now, in our imagination, as we walk deeper inside of the holy city, I wonder if you remember the consoling voice we just heard when vv. 3–4 was read. The text says the voice was from the throne of God. In your imagination (now you’re inside the city!), can you see the throne of God? We may not see it, as the holy city is dazzling-full of God’s glory. Whether we see it or not, I am fully grasped by the deep caring presence of God all around the city. Indeed, it seems like we are not just inside a physical building, but really *inside the heart and mind of God!* As Jesus says somewhere else,⁵⁶ it seems like God is within me (through architecture), and I within God, inseparable and unmovable!⁵⁷
- Space L (left)
Dear friends, as truly as we now find ourselves sitting inside our own church building this morning, we may, right now, like John the Seer, be sitting inside God’s heart and mind; yes, right now! Of course, it would be a bit daunting to recognize ourselves (right now!) sitting inside God’s presence. If you’re like me or Isaiah in Isaiah 6, in this place you must have already encountered the experience of *mysterium tremendum et fascians*—the holy mystery that both excites you and humbles you to the point of uttering in shock, “Woe to me. I’m such a sinner! I haven’t been faithful to the justice cause of the world...”
- Space B (back)
So, you might want to hide or exit immediately? Please, not too fast. The text indicates that once you’re in, you’re in. It says that “nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood...” (v. 27). So, we should be joyful and glad as we’re in already.
- Space O (over)⁵⁸
- Sermon Backdoor
However, it’s time to come back from our imagination, as John the Seer would have made his way back to his daily life in Patmos after the awe-filled vision event. It is surely not the ultimate goal for us to stay in the city, however great, dreamy, and comfy it is! Like the Seer, we need to exit the holy city and climb down the mountain into our daily

⁵⁶ In his farewell address to his disciples recorded in the Gospel of John, Jesus utters, “You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you... On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you” (John 14:17b–20).

⁵⁷ Pallasmaa, in his sophisticated language, articulates how the boundary between the external space or building and one’s mind can be softened, if not disappear entirely. He writes, “As we settle in a space, we similarly allow the boundary between ourselves and the space to soften and become sensitized. The external space and the internal space, the physical and the mental, real and imaginary constitute an indivisible continuum, a singularity.” In a similar vein, poet Noel Arnaud states, “I am the space where I am.” In our architectural-mystical case above, the boundary between ourselves and the holy city or God’s *mysterium* presence disappears. Pallasmaa, “Artistic Generosity,” 25. Noel Arnaud as quoted in Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maira Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 137.

⁵⁸ There could be more content for sermon composition after Spaces F, R, L, and B. The preacher, depending on the text, inspiration, and sermon length, may want to create Spaces O (over), C (center), and U (underground), etc.

world again, which still groans under poverty, injustice, corruption, natural disasters, and many more evil realities. We, the disciples of Christ, are now expected to console, comfort, and transform as we saw and remember the perfect glory and consolation of God. We are—as we’re commissioned, I believe—to begin to build the same holy city, here and now, on earth, immediately, though it won’t be perfect. We will be co-creators and co-architects with God of that new world. We are not perfect; probably sinful. But God will help. God will lead us. So, let’s be ready with our own design and tools. I have some interior design in mind. What do you have?

Conclusion

As Brandon Clifford encourages, we can think of architecture not as “an end product [building project], but as a performance from conception to completion.”⁵⁹ Then, we can conceptualize architectural preaching as a performative-interpretive observation on, and walk through, the text. *The text perceived as architecture* is not an end, a cold product. Rather, the text still breathes its life and embraces the divine presence, further revealing “the mysteries, complexities, and unpredictabilities of the world and human life.”⁶⁰ The preacher is to walk into the text, breathe with it, and encounter multiple mysteries, meanings of life, and the Divine’s presence engraved in many imagined architectural spaces of the text. Then the only remaining task of the preacher is, kindly and gently and with prophetic authority, to guide the listeners around and into the same architectural text. They themselves will find the patient God awaiting them for transformative moments of life, which will lead to their ultimate “human dignity and freedom,”⁶¹ and that of the whole world. God will do God’s part, and the listeners certainly will do their part. Let it be so.

⁵⁹ Brandon Clifford, “Architectural secrets of the World’s Ancient Wonders,” accessed July 4, 2020, https://www.ted.com/talks/brandon_clifford_architectural_secrets_of_the_world_s_ancient_wonders?language=en#t-205129.

⁶⁰ Pallasmaa, “Artistic Generosity,” 35.

⁶¹ Pallasmaa, 35.