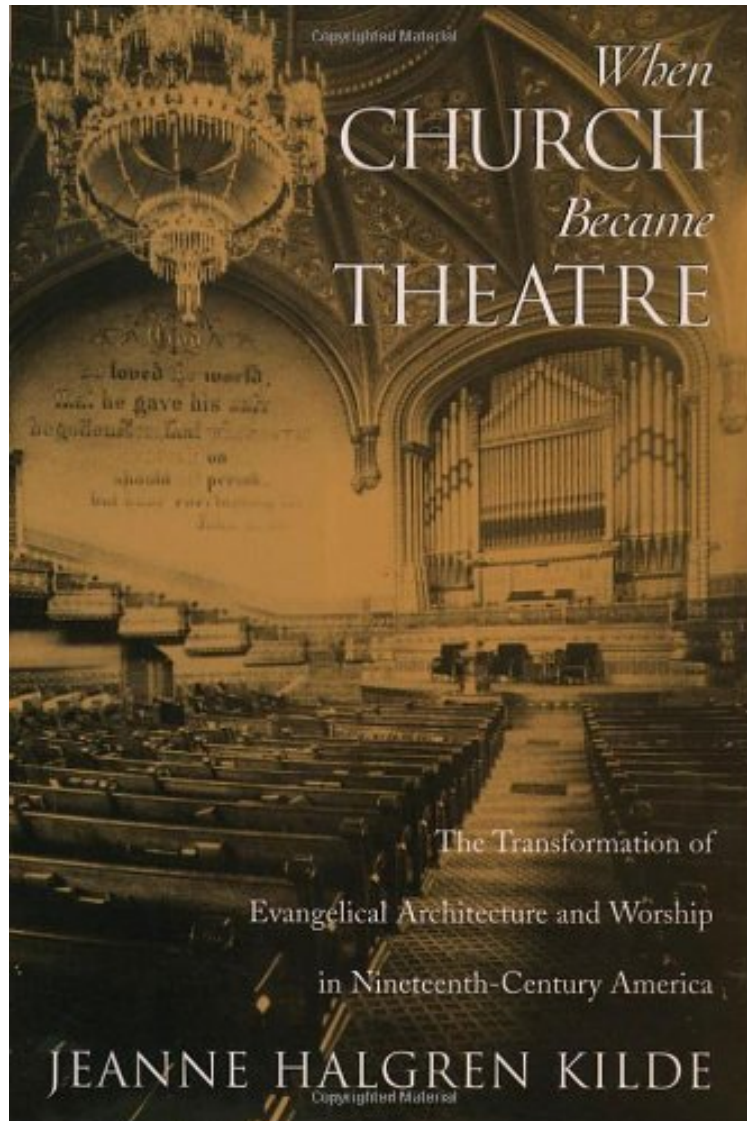


[Pdf free] When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America

When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America

Jeanne Halgren Kilde

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Jeanne Halgren Kilde : When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The architectural ancestors of Contemporary ChristianityBy David

Arbogast I sometimes despair when I encounter various individuals who either believe the Contemporary Christianity is a magnificent new revelation from God or is the bane from the pit of darkness. Rarely is anyone remotely aware of the long history behind Contemporary Christianity even though the nineteenth-century architectural legacy is still very much with us. Dr. Kilde has done a great service (pardon the pun) for both American architectural and theological historians with this book. She traces the evolution of the American church through the nineteenth century in its architectural manifestations. Her scholarship is impeccable and her examples superlative. The text is amply illustrated with historic photographs, both of exteriors but primarily of interiors. I highly recommend this book.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Informative study of the origins of the "auditorium church" -- but not a comprehensive examination of the subject.

By Richard J. Cawthon

A thoughtful, well written, and very informative examination of the development of the "auditorium church" in the late nineteenth century, along with some discussion of its decline and eventual resurgence in popularity in the twentieth century. Although the book is an excellent treatment of the subject, it does have, in my estimation, several weaknesses:

- (1.) For a book that addresses an architectural subject, it doesn't have nearly enough illustrations - although because the author is a social and religious historian, instead of an architectural historian, this is understandable.
- (2.) Because the book is concerned more with the origins of the auditorium church than with its spread, it focuses mostly on major churches in large Northern and Midwestern cities, and doesn't pay much attention to the spread of the auditorium church plan to smaller communities and the construction of auditorium churches in brick or wood instead of stone. The widespread adoption of the auditorium church in the South is scarcely alluded to at all.
- (3.) In part because of that focus on Northern cities, the last chapter, addressing the decline of the popularity of the auditorium church, completely misses the entire phenomenon of the use of the auditorium plan in countless Neoclassical-style churches in the 1910s and 20s. The book asserts that the "neomedieval" auditorium churches were directly supplanted in popularity by churches exhibiting a more formal and liturgically-directed Neo-Gothic style as early as the 1910s. In the South, however, the adoption of Neo-Gothic architecture for evangelical churches did not become widespread until the late 1920s and early 1930s, after the Neoclassical style had been popular for two decades.
- (4.) Again, because of the emphasis on major churches in Northern cities, little attention is given to the dissemination of auditorium church plans and their promotion by boards of church extension, especially by the Southern Baptist Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The fact that Southern Baptists continued to build churches using the auditorium form into the 1920s is mentioned briefly in the last chapter (p. 214), but this is treated as if it were an exception to the national trend; and the architects who designed many of these churches, such as C.W. Bulger of Dallas, Tex., and R.H. Hunt of Chattanooga, Tenn., are not mentioned at all.

In summary, the book is an excellent examination of the origins and early development of the auditorium church, but it falls short as an exposition of the popularity of the auditorium church, as an architectural form, from a broader perspective.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating Church History through the Lens of Architecture

By praxishabitus

I found the history and illustrations found in this book unforgettable. I think of it every time I drive past a church now because I now understand so much more about what is embedded in the history of different forms of church buildings. The aim of the book is to explore the history of American Protestant architecture, but the real meat of the book is a marvelous guide to American church history as a whole. I learned a lot.

A new book that uses Kilde's contribution for understanding a vibrant church is called *Hollywood Faith: Holiness, Prosperity, and Ambition in a Los Angeles Church*. This church meets in a converted movie theater in Hollywood. The book shows how having church in a theater shapes the religion of the church. I highly recommend it.

For nearly eighteen centuries, two fundamental spatial plans dominated Christian architecture: the basilica and the central plan. In the 1880s, however, profound socio-economic and technological changes in the United States contributed to the rejection of these traditions and the development of a radically new worship building, the auditorium church. When *Church Became Theatre* focuses on this radical shift in evangelical Protestant architecture and links it to changes in worship style and religious mission. The auditorium style, featuring a prominent stage from which rows of pews radiated up a sloping floor, was derived directly from the theatre, an unusual source for religious architecture but one with a similar goal-to gather large groups within range of a speaker's voice. Theatrical elements were prominent; many featured proscenium arches, marquee lighting, theatre seats, and even opera boxes. Examining these churches and the discussions surrounding their development, Jeanne Halgren Kilde focuses on how these buildings helped congregations negotiate supernatural, social, and personal power. These worship spaces underscored performative and entertainment aspects of the service and in so doing transformed relationships between clergy and audiences. In auditorium churches, the congregants' personal and social power derived as much from consumerism as from piety, and clerical power lay in dramatic expertise rather than connections to social institutions. By erecting these buildings, argues Kilde, middle class religious audiences demonstrated the move toward a consumer-oriented model of religious participation that gave them unprecedented influence over the worship experience and church mission.

"Kilde's careful and thorough research in published and unpublished congregational denominational, and architectural records successfully engages architectural history, religious studies, and social and cultural history, and this book will

be beneficial to scholars in many disciplines."--The Journal of Religion"Jeanne Halgren Kilde's impressive new book is a Rosetta stone for an undervalued genre of American ecclesiastical architecture. Kilde's work adds complexity to our understanding of both American religious architecture and American religious history."--Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians"This is a very significant book for at least three disciplines: architectural history, church history, and liturgical studies....Kilde shows how changing concepts about the function of worship produced major changes in the design of church buildings, a process which has continued to the present. In so doing, she explains much of the ecclesiastical landscape of America."--James F. White, Drew University"This original and impressive book demonstrates how relevant the history of religious architecture can be for the study of American history. Jeanne Kilde's careful attention to the lived religion of worship spaces as well as to the cultural politics of space greatly advances the understanding of church architecture in the nineteenth century."--David Morgan, Valparaiso University"Jeanne Kilde's study of auditorium churches is a major contribution to the growing literature on 'reading' religious architecture as an important tool for discerning the significance of the material culture of religion in understanding broader themes in the religious, social, and cultural history of the United States."--Peter W. Williams, Miami University"Wonderfully insightful By the book's end, Kilde has enlightened us not only about architecture and interior design, but also about liturgical practice, music, theology, class, gender, power, technology, and the rise of consumer culture. It is hard to convey, in a short review, just how rich this book is." -- Journal of Presbyterian History"Reading architectural space is a highly rewarding enterprise, and one stands in awe of the author's ability to explore nonwritten texts so creatively. By skillfully chronicling the movement from one church type to another and linking this transformation to the social and cultural concerns of American evangelism, this book not only enriches our understanding of American religious history but also brings what was peripheral to center stage, illuminating old questions and opening up new ones."--Worship"Kilde's work will be of interest to religion scholars examining the relationship between faith and culture, historians who seek to understand the evolution of evangelical Christianity in the nineteenth century, architecture scholars desiring to understand the genesis of auditorium/theater-type spaces in relation to Christian worship, and all who seek to understand the presence and impulses of evangelical Christians today who construct ever more sophisticated auditorium spaces for their ministries."--Journal of the American Academy of Religion"When Church Became Theatre expands, synthesizes, and enriches the narrative of both American religious history and American architectural history, which will enlighten professional and amateur scholars alike."-- Religious Studies About the AuthorJeanne Halgren Kilde holds a Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Minnesota. She is currently Visiting Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Macalester College, and Co-director of Macalester's Lilly Project for Work, Ethics, and Vocation.