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COMATOSE AND RICORSO
AN ECCLESIAL EXPLORATION

By

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A thesis submitted to
The Faculty of Graduate Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is based on an examination of abandoned church buildings in Saskatchewan that were built during the second wave of immigration to that province. It proceeds with an inquiry into their architectural purpose at a time when they are no longer in use, and examines the meaning of these places as ruins, as mnemonic devices for contemporary man, and as a reminder of loss. The eighteenth century philosopher Giambattista Vico formulated a theory of the cycle of history that serves as a conceptual model for this investigation. The thesis weaves together descriptive and poetic narratives as a way of resolving the disunity that has developed between matter, memory and spirit. It concludes with an outline for a project that provides an architectural response to the questions that are posed.

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INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2008 I explored six abandoned churches and a synagogue that are scattered across the lower half of Saskatchewan. The reality I encountered did not fit the image I had constructed in my mind; I was surprised by this but not disappointed. I felt as if I was in a world of forgotten beauty, closer to dream than reality. The sacred places seemed like orphans, lost to the world and kept apart from the prosperous cities. Silently holding onto a life of their own, they were waiting for someone to share their story. Despite the harsh weather conditions and the declining interest of the local communities, these churches were still alive, standing at the horizon between life and death. They appeared comatose.

The Western world has changed dramatically as it has experienced the shift from traditionalism to modernism. Every sector of life and culture has struggled with this change, including the religious institutions and buildings of rural Saskatchewan.

“Farm mechanization in the same period has transformed Saskatchewan agriculture into a motorized industry, and has resulted in decreased farm population and communities expanded in area. Such drastic changes in the rural landscape are affecting long established rural institutions such as one-room country schools, country churches, local hospitals, hamlets and indeed the farm family itself. Entirely new ideas about the meaning of

agriculture and rural life are growing out of these changes and initiating a struggle between the old and the new.”¹

Can traditional buildings and places survive in our culture and recover their significance? Should we reject the traditional structures in the name of progress, or should we recall their history? Giambattista Vico observes that in times of cultural upheaval one finds answers by returning to historical origins.² It would therefore be in our own best interest to rediscover the historical meaning of our sacred buildings.

The first section of this thesis describes the churches that were examined. The next section introduces Vico’s theories by way of allegory. The symbol of bread is used to illustrate Vico’s cycle of history, a pattern that is common to the development of all nations. Starting with the age of gods as represented by the myth of Demeter, the ancient times are revisited through the power of *universali fantastici* (imaginative universals).³ This is followed by the age of heroes, in which *fantasia* (imagination) is inspired by heroes that embody our social customs and virtues. It was in this period that Christianity was born and began to grow. These two ages were defined by the power of *fantasia* and were followed by the age of people, an age of rationality in which the world operates in

¹ Archer, John and Koester, Charles, *Footprints in Time*, (Published by: The House of Grant Canada Ltd., 1965) 108

² Vico, Giambattista, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, (Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch trans. Third Edition 1744) 241, axiom 66

³ Vico, Giambattista, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, (Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch trans. Third Edition 1744) 209

Universal fantastici provides a logic of mythical thought

purely conceptual and logical terms. The story of the bread factory reveals our present condition, a world where the art of craft is dominated by the power of the machine.

The next section engages in a reflection about the validity of restoration and preservation. It begins by considering John Ruskin's critical view of restoration, which is of great relevance to the issues examined in this paper. The views of William Morris on the preservation of sacred places further supports the argument that present methods of preserving historical buildings do not sustain the true architectural meaning of these sacred places. Indeed, such techniques eliminate the architectural history and identity of rural Saskatchewan. Some of these sacred places have already lost their meaning through the homogenizing effects of a restoration that is desperate to arrest time.

The last part of this thesis describes a project that aims to revive a church that has become comatose. The sacred places are part of a cycle that is informed by *corso* and *ricorso*. All nations develop through this cycle and are bound to the three ages of ideal eternal history. After the third age every nation disintegrates and starts the whole process over again. The beginning of the *ricorso* is the ruin of the *corso* that preceded it. To find the true meaning of these places we must experience their origin without arresting time. It is through engaging physically and spiritually in the process of making, rather than conceptualizing, that we restore culture. The history of a place is experienced through creative imagination and *factura* (making). Vico's principals of *verum* and *factum* (true and fabricated) assert that humans can deeply know only that which they themselves have

made or are in principle capable of making.⁴ The restorative power of *factura* shall be realized by constructing three new buildings and a set of outdoor bread ovens that surround the existing church. Firstly, the architectural methods used to build these structures will employ the techniques used to construct the original church, thus preserving its physical tradition. Secondly the spirit of the church will be rekindled through the experience of traditional bread making. This experience begins with the threshing of raw wheat and is followed by grinding, mixing and baking. Once the bread has been baked the makers gather together around the church to enjoy the bread they have made. The making of bread makes present the memory of our lost spiritual heritage. It nourishes both body and soul.

⁴ Vico, Giambattista, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, (Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch) 349

PART I

Field Research

The field research involved locating and studying a variety of sacred buildings. Interviews with second and third generation descendents of immigrants provided local histories that were supplemented by archival research. Details provided by the people interviewed were especially useful in determining whether a building was the original or a later replacement. In some cases details were difficult to uncover because the descendents had hazy recollections of their ancestral history.

The sacred buildings of the early Saskatchewan settlers tended to use similar materials regardless of the ethnic origin of the builder. The settlers wanted to build their churches as quickly as possible and took advantage of the newly available mass-produced building products. Railroad construction made sawn lumber and wire nails widely available. Nonetheless there were some building techniques and practices that set the churches apart. These architectural idiosyncrasies are rooted in the traditional practice of the old country and were modified in the new world by environment and exposure to other cultures. The main building material used for the church buildings was wood. Wood was widely available and could be easily shaped by the hands of the artisans. Like other

buildings of similar age, many of the sacred buildings have been altered over time in an effort to arrest the natural weathering process.

St. Peter and Paul Romanian Orthodox Church



Figure 1 - St. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church, Flintoft, Saskatchewan
Photos and drawing by author (October 2008)

In 1906 a group of Romanian immigrants came to Canada and traveled to the southern part of Saskatchewan. They settled in an area called Lynthorpe, which later became known as Flintoft. These people lived in dugouts, adobe huts, and tents. As the years passed the settlers realized they needed a place to worship, baptize, perform marriage ceremonies and bury their dead, but money was scarce. Their prayers were answered when Nicholai Joara came from Romania to visit relatives. When he heard about the situation he offered to pay for the lumber to build a church. Once they had financing, the settlers began hauling lumber from Moose Jaw. They worked many long hours to build a foundation by hauling sand and rocks on flat deck racks drawn by horses and oxen. Once the foundation was laid, Gabrielle Banescu, the lead carpenter, was able to construct the church with the help of other locals. There were no drawings or blue prints. The building

design was based on generations of practical experience. During my interview with John Cojocaru he commented that “There were no other churches in the area. It was just built and done. Gabrielle, the carpenter, knew how to build things from Romania.”⁵ Over time the church began to show signs of deterioration. In addition the size of the church community shrunk as members moved away or died.⁶

Despite the falling number of parishioners, the community was determined to preserve the church’s beauty for future generations and on August 9, 1979, renovations on the church began. The plan was to temporarily move the church from its site, which required the removal of the altar table. The members were quite surprised and puzzled when they discovered that the table could not be moved. After several unsuccessful attempts and lengthy discussions, they decided to break the altar table. The church was then lifted and moved next to the cemetery where it remained until a new concrete foundation was laid. The exterior of the church and the bell tower were restored with new vinyl shingles, vinyl siding and new windows that looked identical to the original ones. In the end the restoration efforts were not entirely successful. The church was repaired, but it did not regain consciousness since it is only used once per year.⁷

⁵ Interview with John Cojocaru, October 13, 2008

⁶ *Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church*, (Flintoft, Saskatchewan, 75th anniversary 1911-1988, edited by Mrs. Karen Aussant, article) 13

⁷ *Ibid* 13

Bekevar Hungarian Presbyterian Church

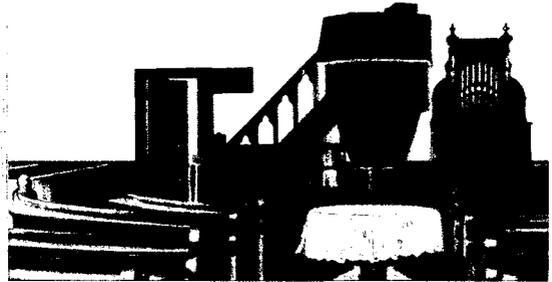


Figure 2 - Bekevar Presbyterian Church, near Kipling, Saskatchewan
Photos and drawing by author (October 2008)

The story of Bekevar began in 1890 with the arrival of five families from Hungary to what was then a part of the Northwest Territory of Assiniboia. They were God fearing people who met for worship in their homes. In 1907 Rev. John Kovach organized his congregation to construct a church just outside of Kipling. It was completed in 1911 and was the center of the community for more than five decades. The church was built by the hard work and dedication of the local farmers. The exterior of the church is covered with wood siding in a typical shiplap profile. Its two large bells could be heard from as far as eight miles away and the acoustics within the sanctuary are close to perfect.

With the passing years the liturgical language changed from Magyar to English, and the people moved to farms closer to Kipling. The congregation considered moving the church to Kipling, but the condition and age of the building prevented this and a new church was built in the town.⁸ There are still a few people who remain interested in looking after the old church. It has been painted white, burgundy and light green. The

original lathe and plaster interior has been replaced with gypsum board and the building has a new concrete foundation. Some of the windows are paneled due to vandalism and storms. A single service is held there each year in July.⁹

Thingvalla Icelandic Church and Cemetery



Figure 3 - Thingvalla Church, Churchbridge, Saskatchewan
Photos and drawing by author (October 2008)

In 1885 the first Icelandic settlement was formed in the Churchbridge district. The settlement was named Thingvalla, after Thingvellur in Iceland. The first Icelanders here built log houses roofed with lumber and shingles. In March of 1887 the first death occurred and the settlers immediately called a meeting to select a suitable site for a cemetery. Narfi Halldorsson donated one acre of his homestead for the cemetery situated in a rural area surrounded by wheat fields. In 1920 the Thingvalla Church was erected,

⁸ Pamphlet from the Bekevar Presbyterian Church

⁹ Interviews with Garnett Smalley and Marg Deberham, Kenedy, Saskatchewan, October 14, 2008

again without any plans. The main carpenter was Tomas Paulson. Like other settlers he based his design on traditions carried from his homeland.¹⁰

As with many of the religious buildings, Thingvalla Church has gone through a restoration process during which the identity and character of the church has been exchanged for an artificial façade. The roof and the original shiplap siding have been replaced by new materials. The foundation was originally made of stone and was replaced forty years ago by a new concrete foundation to prevent the building from sagging and shifting. The few locals with whom I had a chance to speak expressed the idea that by replacing, adding, and removing they would make the church more appealing to the eye. The last service held there took place in 1953.¹¹

Veregin Doukhobor Prayer Home



Figure 4 - Veregin Doukhobor Prayer Home, Veregin, Saskatchewan
Photos by author (October 2008)

The Veregin Doukhobor Prayer Home was named after Peter Vasilievitch Veregin, the leader of the Doukhobors. In 1902 he brought 7,500 Doukhobor settlers to Saskatchewan.

¹⁰ Pamphlet from the Thingvalla Church and Cemetery History

¹¹ Interview with Lynne Johnson, Churchbridge, Saskatchewan, October 14, 2008

The Doukhobors broke from the Orthodox Church in the sixteenth century and refused to pay allegiance to the Tsar, acknowledging only God as their lord and master. They believed that human life is sacred and took the commandment “thou shall not kill” as being the most important law. The two storey Prayer Home was built by home grown architect from Russia without any blueprints and by the labour of the Doukhobor settlers. It became the home of Peter Veregin and was also used for meetings and gatherings of the Doukhobors. The Prayer Home has been preserved in a state that recalls a lively period from the history of the local settlers. The verandas present on each side of the building are covered by wide overhanging eaves, and intricate handmade carvings inspired by Doukhobor traditions enhance the exterior. These architectural traditions have all but vanished from current design techniques.¹² The Prayer Home is kept clean and undisturbed like a museum and is no longer used for worship.

Beth Israel Synagogue

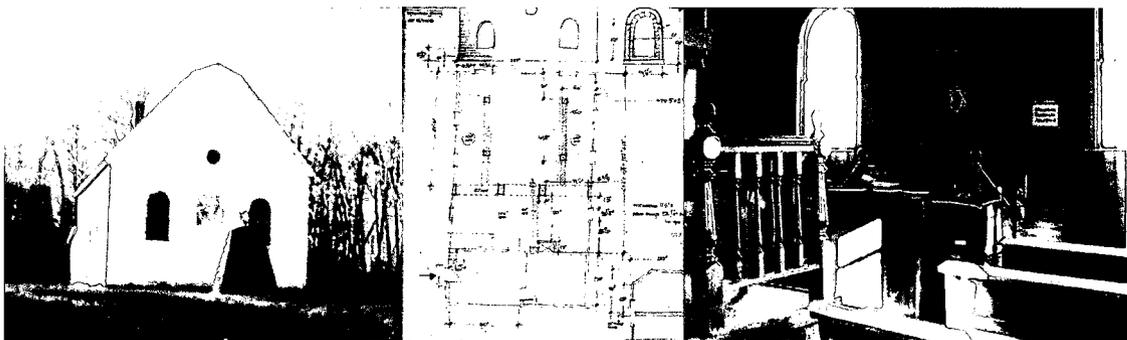


Figure 5 - Beth Israel Synagogue, Edenbridge, Saskatchewan
Photos and drawing by author (October 2008)

¹² Interview with patrons of the New Horizons General Store, Veregin, Saskatchewan, October 15, 2008

In 1906 a group of immigrants who came from Lithuania via South Africa founded the Edenbridge Hebrew colony. Shortly after their arrival, the new settlers established a cemetery and in 1908 erected a synagogue so that that could continue to practice their faith. The synagogue also served as a social and cultural gathering place for the community.

The steep pitched roof and end lancet windows of the synagogue are typical of the plain Gothic style used in rural North America during the late 19th and early 20th century. The synagogue has a wooden frame exterior with painted white clapboard siding. This modest exterior is offset by an unexpectedly elaborate interior that is entirely composed of varnished wood paneling. The building has a second balcony to accommodate female worshippers in accordance with the orthodox Jewish tradition that separates male and female congregants.

For over half a century the synagogue served the Jewish farming community that by the 1920's had increased to fifty families. The attractions of urban life and the advent of farm mechanization combined to reduce this once flourishing community to less than five families. In 1964 the original synagogue ceased to operate as a place of worship. The few remaining members moved to another synagogue in the city of Melfort.

St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church



Figure 6 - St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church , Ponass Lake, Saskatchewan
Photos and drawing by author (October 2008)

St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church was built in 1910 and was the very first church constructed in the area of Ponass Lake. It was built by settlers who came from Ukraine, Russia. The church has an east-west orientation, with the front door facing west and the altar facing east. It has a cruciform layout and is adorned with an onion-shaped dome typical of Ukrainian style churches. The free standing bell tower was built in 1929 in the old Ukrainian style. The church and the bell tower are painted white with green trim, a Ukrainian tradition. A remarkable feature of the church is its beautiful interior. Upon entering one is captivated by the iconography and the beautiful decorative details found inside. In July of 1992 the building was completely renovated. One night during the summer of 1995 the church was hit by lightning. The lightning damaged the roof and some of the interior structures of the church. It traveled through a steel tie rod and struck an image of the Virgin Mary that was on the wall. Somehow the image did not catch on fire. A small mark was left on the heart of the Virgin Mary however the rest of the image was untouched. The image remains in the church to this day, a reminder of faith and hope. The final church service was held on August 28, 1975.

Swedish Mission Covenant Church

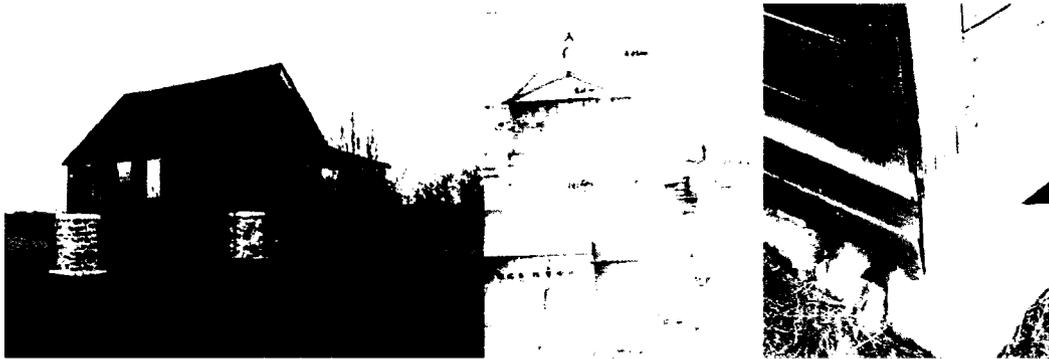


Figure 7 - Covenant Church, northeast of Young, Saskatchewan
Photo and drawing by author (October 2008)

The only building that was not altered and remains true to its origin is the Covenant Church. I was most deeply moved by this particular church. The main thing that I experienced was a sense of sorrow. The fact that there were no people, that the building appeared to be dying, that the landscape was so desolate, seemed to cry out that we are undergoing a spiritual crisis, a crisis for which this church is an architectural symbol. I began to ask how sacred buildings and places might persist and recover their original meaning. The theories of Vico provide insight into how we might recall these origins.

PART II

The Cycle of History

Gianbattista Vico's theory of the cycle of history postulates that the history of a nation can be divided into three ages, namely the age of gods, the age of heroes, and the age of people.¹³ After each *corso* or cycle of the ages comes the *ricorso*, the new cycle. *Ricorso* is a period of undefined chaos that resets everything back to the first age. It was Vico's belief that all human activities, institutions, governments, and civilizations are destined to progress through these three ages and then collapse back into their original state. In this way the world as a whole and every one of its parts moves through a beginning, a middle and an end. The cycle of history is related to memory, for it is in the memory (aided by imagination) that history actually exists. In the third age, the age of people, thought is dominated not by imagination and invention, but by criticism and logical judgment.¹⁴

As logic and reflection are associated with concepts, recollection and imagination are associated with images.¹⁵ Some scholars have argued that imagination and memory are nothing more than decaying sense. In *The Leviathan* Thomas Hobbes says:

¹³ Ibid 173. The three cycles were originally formulated by the Egyptians

¹⁴ Verene, Donald Philip, "Memory", *Vico's Science of the Imagination*, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981) 108

¹⁵ Verene, Donald Philip, "Memory", *Vico's Science of the Imagination*, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981) 102

“For after the object is removed, or the eye shut, we still retain an image of the thing seen, though more obscure than when we see it. And this is what the Latins call imagination, from the image made in seeing; and they apply the same, though improperly, to all the other senses. But the Greeks call it fancy, which signifies appearance, and it is as proper to one sense, as to another. Imagination therefore is nothing but decaying sense and is found in men, and many other living creatures, as well sleeping, as waking.”¹⁶

Later in his writing Hobbes connects imagination with memory:

“This decaying sense, when we would express the thing itself, I mean fancy itself, we call imagination, as I said before: but when we would express the decay, and signify that the sense is fading, old and past, it is called memory. So that imagination and memory are but one thing, which for divers considerations hath divers names.”¹⁷

Hobbes’s view is in line with the popular understanding that memory and imagination are nothing more than faded sense impressions. Vico argues that we are not bound within the immediacy of sense. The imagination is not a merely psychological process or decaying sense. Connected with empirical fact and cognition it becomes a form of thought that

¹⁶ Hobbes, Thomas, “Leviathan”, *Hobbes Selection*, (edited by Frederick J. E. Woodbridge, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1930) 147

enables the knower to travel back in time and place the mind in touch with the original experience. This process is described by Vico's structure of memory that has three distinct aspects, namely remembering (*memoria*) "when it remembers things", imagination (*fantasia*) "when it alters and imitates", and invention (*ingegno*) "when it gives them a new turn".¹⁸ It is through the power of *ingegno* that the subject moves from one act of sense formation to another, creating "further acts of formation that combine past acts and influence present ones."¹⁹

Covenant Church

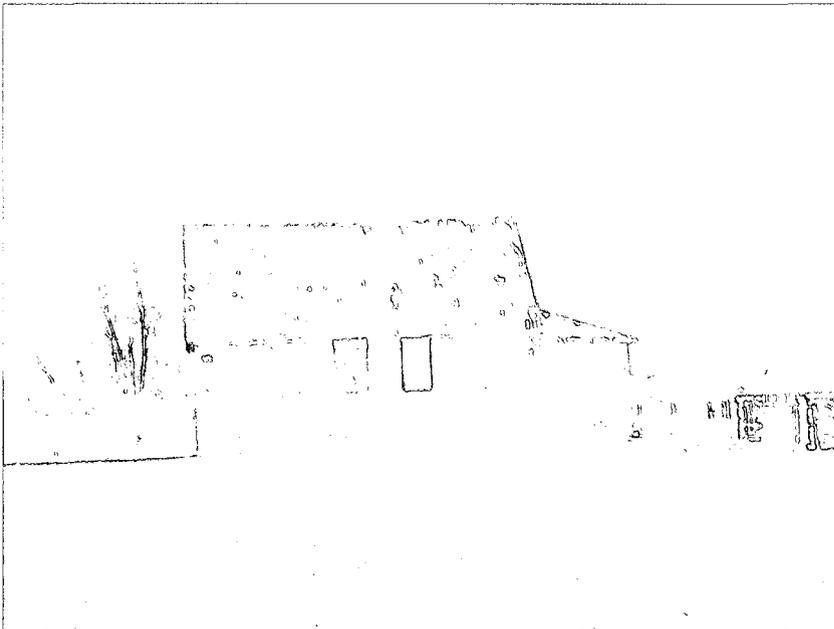


Figure 8 - Covenant Church profile
Photo by author (October 2008)

¹⁷ Ibid 148, 149

¹⁸ Vico, Giambattista, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, (Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch) 819

¹⁹ Verene, Donald Philip, "Memory", *Vico's Science of the Imagination*, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981) 105

My final stop during the tour through Saskatchewan was the Covenant Church. From the map it seemed that I was near my final destination, however I unexpectedly found myself in front of a farm house. Hesitant to knock on the front door, I looked around and realized that the sun was going down. Overcoming my fear I knocked and a strong, healthy looking man in his late forties came out of the house. His name was Garnett. Pointing in the direction opposite to his farm he said with a friendly smile, "You just missed it, it was around the corner. You know you are the second person this year asking about this place."

It was not difficult to figure out that the other person must have been my advisor. I smiled and then asked if he could say a few words about the church.

"Not too much to say" he replied, then after a long pause added, "All I can think of is that the land, roughly four acres, was donated by Oscar Runsten and in 1916 the church was built. It was a Swedish Lutheran church and was very active for many years. Unfortunately it has not been used for some 60 years or more. There are not too many people interested in it. The building is just a simple cedar box sitting on a few rocks and the windows and doors are paneled so no one can go in. However the cemetery on the church grounds is still in use. Last week they buried a person there but other than that, there is not much I can tell you. Perhaps you can ask my dad, he might remember more."

I got in the car and drove over to the home of Garnett's parents. His father John was a very nice fellow although he had a hard time remembering things. He talked about the weather and the birds. Eventually he remembered a time when it was spring and he was

inside the church. Sunday school was being held and everyone was distracted by the noise of the woodpeckers. After taking a deep breath he said, "Now I remember. Here is what happened."

The Age of the Gods

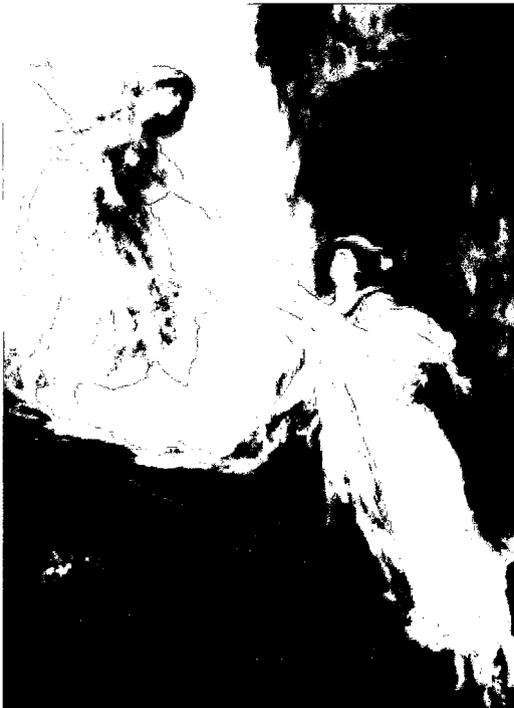


Figure 9 - Persephone returns from the underworld to her mother Demeter

Source:
(www.mlahanas.de/Greeks/Mythology/Persephone.html)
2009

It was fall and my wife asked me to buy some bread from the local store. I drove out to the store and was standing at the bread counter when a woman grabbed my hand and whispered in my ear, "It is time for a change. This bread is not feeding you. It is empty inside. Come with me and I will show you the living bread. But before we do that I need to find my daughter."

"Who are you?" I asked with fear in my voice. This strange person was dressed as if for a carnival.

She answered, "My name is Demeter. I am the Greek goddess of bread, the mother who makes the people grow. Some say that I am Mother Earth. Follow me and don't lose the seed that I just placed into your hand." She squeezed my hand tightly while I desperately

looked around for help.

My surroundings suddenly changed and I experienced a combination of uncertainty and wonder. The walls were gone and the golden-blue of wheat and sky framed the space around us. We were standing in an open field when a building unexpectedly rose out of the ground. I was wondering what type of building this might be when Demeter took hold of my hand again. Before I had the chance to ask her anything she whispered, "Follow me. I will lead you to the place where living bread is made."

She struck the ground with her foot and a peal of thunder broke the silence. The earth split open and a stone path appeared that gradually sloped downward. The path led under the building, which I realized was an altered version of the Covenant Church. We began walking down the path. The rain followed our steps and was caught in gutters that ran along stone walls on either side. Then Demeter said, "Now I will tell you my story. I have a beautiful daughter named Persephone. Zeus is her father. On a beautiful summer day Persephone was picking flowers when suddenly a strange god in his chariot came rushing up and grabbed her. Persephone cried for help but Zeus did not respond. She struggled to escape from the arms of her captor and her cries for help rose to the sky. I heard her cry and began searching the earth. I spoke with the goddess of darkness, Hecate, but she had seen nothing. I then questioned Helios, the sun god, and he had seen everything. He told me that the god of the dead had taken away my daughter and made her his wife. Helios advised me to let go of my rage and accept that I could not find a better son-in-law than the immortal prince of Hades. Nonetheless I remained angry and continued my disconsolate wanderings. I expressed my anger by making all of the fields unfruitful; I would not let the seed rise out of the earth. This was my revenge not only

upon the gods, but upon all men and beasts. Zeus tried to placate me by offering me the most precious of gifts but I refused them all. Finally Zeus was compelled to bow to me to prevent creation from returning to dust. He sent Hermes the messenger to the underworld and asked for Persephone to be released. The god of the underworld agreed and gave Persephone her freedom, saying 'Go, Persephone, to thy sorrow-garbed mother!' Looking out of my temple, I spotted Persephone stepping into the upper world. I cried out in joy and happiness, but later asked my daughter if she had eaten anything from the underworld. Persephone confessed that she had. I was cast down once more. I knew that whoever ate from Hades' food must remain a third of the year in the underworld. This is why the seed stays eight months with mankind and spends four months in the underworld. I came to accept this state of affairs and promised never again to cause unfruitfulness on the earth." She paused. We were at the end of the stone path in front of a subterranean door. With a smile on her face she continued, "I shall leave you here for it is time for me to depart, but don't forget my story when you go underground." Demeter left but I heard her singing as I tried to open the door,

"Happy is he who sees this, of men dwelling upon this earth! But he who does not share in these rites, whose life is without them, shall suffer a different fate in the mist-darkened underworld."²⁰

²⁰ Jacob, H.E., *Six Thousand Years of Bread*, (trans. Richard and Clara Winston, Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1944). The myth of Demeter is interpreted and incorporated into the story

Demeter's story is not easily understood from the perspective of contemporary culture. Our attempt to comprehend and imagine the culture that produced this myth is impeded because we tend to approach the story from the outside, as something that is not part of our lives. Vico notes that the difficulty lies in the fact that modern man has lost the power of creative imagination over critical rationalism. Only *fantasia*, the power of human imagination, can penetrate into the lives and thoughts of these early men. By setting up an imaginative framework or 'mythological universe' we can see their lives in our own, their origin as our origin. Imagination or *fantasia* makes the object familiar and leads to its rediscovery.²¹

The wisdom of the first people was the wisdom of metaphor rather than reasoned thought. In his major work the *Scienza Nuova (New Science)*, Vico talks about how the god Jove represented the sky and took the form of a giant body. Men escaped the immediacy of their perceived world in moments of fear.²² Vico postulates that they were not afraid of something external in nature, but of their own human character unknowingly projected onto nature and focused in the image of Jove.²³

“By this primordial power of re-feeling, Jove is slowly transformed into the world of human symbols, into the medium of language and cultural

²¹ Vico, Giambattista, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, (Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch) 338

²² Kunze, Donald, *Thought and Place: The Architecture of Eternal Places in the Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, (Peter Lang Publishing, Inc. New York 1987, Vol.2) 105

²³ Jove or Jupiter was the god of the sky and thunder

institutions in which all sensation is modified and given shape as humanity develops into the ideal eternal history.”²⁴

The sensation of remembering or rediscovery is accomplished by imagination that evolves into thought. Experience is transformed into metaphor, and it is clear that the first men not only had the power of metaphorical thinking but also the power of memory. The sky becomes the medium of signs by which men interpret what Jove is communicating to them. Their reflective thought is the result of image rather than concept.²⁵ The image of agriculture develops in the first clearings made to gain a view of the sky, and culture grows up around the practice of divination.²⁶ One of their mythical gods was the bread giver Demeter, who lost and eventually recovered her daughter from the underworld. Vico regards the mythic narrative as having a logic of its own. All nations used the power of *fantasia* to make the world intelligible in terms of gods. The mystery of Demeter’s story does not come from the dramatization of the descent of Persephone and her return to the upper world, but rather from the promise of resurrection represented by the death and rebirth of the seed.²⁷ The faith of the past is found again in the present through another medium.

²⁴ Vico, Giambattista, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, (Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch)

²⁵ Verene, Donald Philip, “Memory”, *Vico’s Science of the Imagination*, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981) 105

²⁶ Vico, Giambattista, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, (Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch) 167

²⁷ Jacob, H.E., *Six Thousand Years of Bread*, (trans. Richard and Clara Winston, Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1944) 63

The Age of Heroes



Figure 10 - Saint Ignatius of Antioch being devoured by lions

Source:
(www.josemariaescriva.info/article/the-colosseum) 2009

John offered me a cup of tea. I accepted and asked, "So what happened next?"

He placed the teakettle on the stove, slowly walked back to the dining table and after a long pause continued the story.

"I opened the door and stepped into a space under the church that had been cut out of clay.

The room was low and compressed and looked like a catacomb. Blocks of hardened clay and

stones were scattered around. In the veins of

the stones, broken and disconnected lines

contained traces that seemed to stretch back to

the beginning of time.

I ran my fingers along the wall and felt the fear of those who had been here long before me. I shuddered and stepped back. A set of images appeared to me, a ship, an olive

branch, a dove and a little fish. I noticed a shadow against one of the walls. It was cast by a round stone table standing in the center of the room. On the table were a few

candles emitting a soft glow that illuminated the sacks of flour hanging from the ceiling. From the darkness an elderly man emerged accompanied by a small group of men and

women. He wiped his hands on his apron and said, "Join us. We are here to make bread."

The old man inspired a sense of trust and security and I did not hesitate to follow him. He showed me how to mix flour with a small amount of water from a jar. While we waited after mixing the dough I saw a young man remove a stone from the wall. Inside the wall there was a box made out of old cedar that contained a lump of starter dough. He brought the dough to the table and said to us, "Take this. Mix it with your dough and leave some for the future."

Vico describes the heroic age as the connection between the world of gods and the world of men. The mythic view is translated into human works that civilize and refine humankind. In the age of heroes human thought is developed into self-consciousness and imagination. The Roman Empire was part of this age, and it was into this world that Christianity was introduced. In a temporal sense the Covenant Church owes its existence to the acceptance of Christianity by the Romans. The Romans were hungry for metaphysical understanding, and after several centuries of intense persecution the teachings of the early Christians eventually won them over.

Jesus taught by analogy and made great use of parables that were based upon rural and domestic life. He once said "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever."²⁸ He also taught that we are like grains of wheat that fall to the ground, die, and produce new life. The wheat seed is used as both a symbol of death and a symbol of new life. Wheat in the form of bread is an important

²⁸ *The Jerusalem Bible*, (Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1966) John 6:51

symbol in the Jewish tradition as well. Each year the Jewish people celebrate Passover, and bread is served to remind them of how God released them from slavery and sustained them with manna, a miraculous type of bread that fell from the sky. At his last Passover meal Jesus also offered his disciples bread. He identified the bread with his body and asked his disciples to offer bread in memory of him. Greek versions of this passage use the word *anamnesis* for memory, which in context means to *re-experience*. Jesus thus instructs his disciples to re-experience him after he is gone, knowing that he is soon to give his life in a heroic act of sacrifice.

The age of heroes is the boundary between the age of gods and the age of men. It can be compared to the horizon between the earth and the sky, or to the liminal space that defines a threshold realm from which new forms of identity are born. It is in the liminal space that past and present encounter each other.

The Age of People

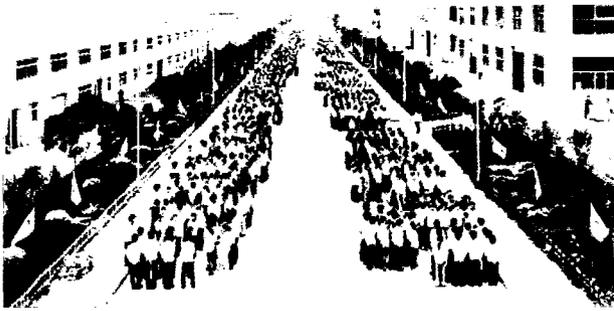


Figure 11 - Chinese factory workers

Source:
(betweentwocities.com/2008/07/16/mandatory-fat-checks-for-japanese-workers/) 2009

The tea was ready. John took a sip from his cup and offered me some cookies. I felt hungry and did not hesitate to have one. "Did you make these cookies?" I asked John.

With a smile on his face he said, "No, they were bought from the store. But let me tell you another story. I grew up in a small house on the prairies with

my sisters and parents. My mother had short, dark hair with lovely skin and she always seemed calm. She had a Swedish background and worked very hard around a coal burning range. We had visitors every day, stopping for a coffee or helping my father at the farm. My mom never let anybody leave the house without trying her food. Some days the kitchen would be packed with more than ten people. Cooking for so many people was an all-day job. While dad was busy in the wheat fields outside mother was busy baking bread inside. Fresh bread came out of the oven daily. Every evening she mixed the flour and potato water into a sticky mixture. This she placed in a stone pickle crock, which she wrapped with blankets secured with safety pins to keep it tepid. Sometimes during the night I would wake up and watch the dough rising. One night I had trouble sleeping. It was during the summer and the nights were as hot as the day. I went to the kitchen to get a sip of water and I saw the dough rising up so high that it oozed out of the wrappings. I

went back to bed and had a dream. In my dream I saw a huge wall covered with dials and gauges. Everywhere there were switches and diagrams that read 'minute number', 'thermostat', 'try indicator', and 'hood exhauster switch'. I couldn't understand what had happened to my mother's bread oven. I realized that I was in a factory for making bread, a well-designed machine that possessed none of the beauty of my mother's kitchen. I asked the engineer in charge if I could touch the dough. He answered, "No you may not, you carry too many germs."

I asked again "What about the mystery of making bread?"

He replied, "You do not need mystery, the machine takes care of everything and it doesn't even break a sweat." He laughed and checked the needles and lights.

"But bread is a living thing!" I protested. "Some bread needs warmth, other bread needs cold, some need silence while others are not disturbed by noise. Living bread requires tender care, not a machine." The engineer gave me a disapproving look and said "Poor child, there is no magic. It is a chemical reaction and nothing else."

"This is not true" I said, "I do not understand you", and I fled from the man in alarm. Soon after I heard a voice from far away and opened my eyes. I was relieved and happy to see my mother sitting on the edge of my bed. She said, "Did you have a bad dream? Hurry up, wash your face, and help me in the kitchen."

The age of people is the age of humanity. In this age thought is dominated by criticism and logical judgment, the memory has become weak, and labour loses its dignity.²⁹ When God cast Adam out of Eden he said,

“With sweat on your brow shall you eat your bread, until you return to the soil, as you were taken from it. For dust you are and to dust you shall return.”³⁰

Labour is a part of human life. We have been made and we make. At once an action and its result, *factura* refers to things made by human beings. Of course it is possible to consider things created by machines as having been made. Yet the term *factura* is most appropriately applied to the results of human effort. The double meaning of *factura* as both process and product emphasizes the idea that human work is as important as its material results. Art is essentially the activity of making things.

“In a picture executed in oil, one thing, the material of colour and canvas, is transformed by the mechanism of art into the image of another thing.”³¹

Such paintings depict a world that the hand of a master has made visible by the labour of his brush strokes. The link between thought and image is established when *doing*

²⁹ Verene, Donald Philip, “Memory”, *Vico’s Science of the Imagination*, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981) 108

*³⁰ *The Jerusalem Bible*, (Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1966) Genesis 3:19

³¹ Koerner, Joseph Leo, “*Factura*”, (from *RES 36, Autumn 1999*) 11

becomes visible in that which is *done*.³² With the advent of modernism, artistic effort has been replaced by a seemingly random process of arranging found objects (things that the artist had no part in creating). This type of art coincided with the birth of automated production and industrialization, both of which are responsible for a number of our social ills. The influence of technology has resulted in changes which have led to the disappearance of tradition.³³

The benefits of the industrial process spring from its use of repetitive procedures to produce large quantities of fixed models. It is therefore inherently depersonalizing, inflexible, and lacking in variety.³⁴ Machine made things are immune to human spontaneity. Hand made things bind human ingenuity into their very matter. One can see in them the wonder of *factura*, which has a beginning, a development and a completion. Machine made products do not have such a history. In a sense their time has collapsed, with no liminal period to separate conception from existence. They are facts rather than ideas, things that have not travelled. One is left with a final product and a forgetfulness of being. It is the liminal part of *factura* that gives life to the process of architectural creation. In the work of Carlo Scarpa, for example, one can trace the human story behind architecture from the beginning, from the moment when raw material was first touched by human hands to the way it has been held, moulded, mixed, stretched and placed into position. Today machine made objects are stripped of depth and purged of subjectivity.

³² Ibid. According to Koerner *factura* brings together head and hand, spirit and flesh, human and thing, producer and product, making and the made

³³ Abraham, Raimund, *Elementare Architektur Architectonics VI*

³⁴ Fry, Maxwell, "The conscious architect" *Art in a Machine Age*, (Methuen & Co Ltd., London, 1969) 45

The living hand of the artist has been replaced by soulless automatons. One can almost hear the anguished cry of mankind deprived of his transcendence.³⁵

“The sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth’s shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating to the breath
Of the night-wind down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.”³⁶

³⁵ Ibid 50

³⁶ Ibid 85

PART III

Restoration

The way in which people view the past is to a considerable extent reflected in the objects that they choose to preserve. Today we are very conscious of the need to preserve buildings that have historical and architectural value. This concern is not a modern development, for in the Middle Ages and other periods the value of a building was often determined by its historical significance. In Canada there are a number of ecclesiastical buildings that are of architectural and historical interest. A large percentage of these buildings are threatened with demolition because they are abandoned or because they do not meet current building codes. The ones that still exist are in what might be called a comatose state. They are destined to undergo either an anti-aging (preservation) process or a skilful forgery (restoration). Such methods treat the building as an abstract piece of design rather than as a living piece of history.

John Ruskin and William Morris were among the first to look critically at the restoration and preservation movement. Ruskin observed that “by restoring you pretend to create a survival which does not really exist.”³⁷ In his book “The Seven Lamps of Architecture” Ruskin makes the following comments:

³⁷ Pevsner, Nikolaus, “Scrape and Anti-scrape”, *The Future of the Past, Attitudes to Conservation 1174-1974*, (Edited by: Jane Fawcett, Thames and Hudson, London, 1976) 35

“Neither by the public nor by those who have the care of public monuments, is the true meaning of the word restoration understood. It means the most total destruction which a building can suffer: a destruction out of which no remnants can be gathered: a destruction accompanied with false descriptions of the thing destroyed. Do not let us deceive ourselves in this important matter: it is impossible, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture. That which I have above insisted upon as the life of the whole, the spirit which is given only by the hand and eye of the workman, can never be recalled. Another spirit can be given by another time, and it is then a new building; but the spirit of the dead workman cannot be summoned up, and commanded to direct other hands, and other thoughts.”³⁸

Rather than restoration Ruskin recommends conservation, by which he means preserving the building from time and neglect without any attempt to add, alter or restore it. In his opinion time and neglect do less damage than restoration, which produces a good imitation of the original but destroys its authenticity. He suggests that proper care of a monument involves giving it a crutch rather than removing a limb.³⁹ Such an approach allows a building to retain its character and many generations will be “born and pass

³⁸ Ruskin, John, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, Seventh printing, 1979) 184

³⁹ Ruskin, John, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, Seventh printing, 1979) 186

away beneath its shadow”.⁴⁰ Ruskin’s appeals did not change the general opinion until 1877 when William Morris wrote a letter that discussed how churches are living history and should be protected.

“What I wish for, therefore, is that an association should be set on foot to keep a watch on old monuments, to protect against all ‘restoration’ that means more than keeping out wind and weather, and by all means, literary and other, to awaken a feeling that our ancient buildings are not mere ecclesiastical toys, but sacred monuments of the nation’s growth and hope.”⁴¹

The Greek word *ekklesia* means a gathering or assembly of people called together to worship. A church is a building erected for the glory of God and for the use of man. The abandoned churches of Saskatchewan embody architectural styles associated with the period of European immigration. If we destroy the phase of architecture that these churches represent by aggressive restoration, they will in a sense cease to exist, and nothing will be left to record their story.⁴²

⁴⁰ Ibid 186

⁴¹ Pevsner, Nikolaus, “Scrape and Anti-scrape”, *The Future of the Past, Attitudes to Conservation 1174-1974*, (Edited by: Jane Fawcett, Thames and Hudson, London, 1976) 51

⁴² Ibid 52

“There was yet in the old some life, some mysterious suggestion of what it had been, and of what it had lost: some sweetness in the gentle lines which rain and sun had wrought.”⁴³

With regard to these sacred places it is not simply a question of architectural meaning but a question of ethics and respect.

“We have no right whatever to touch them. They are not ours. The dead have still their right in them: that which they labored for, the praise of achievement or the expression of religious feeling, we have no right to obliterate.”⁴⁴

Our restless and disconnected present can unite itself with history only if we stop trying to eliminate the past.

⁴³ Ibid 185

⁴⁴ Ruskin, John, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, Seventh printing, 1979) 186

Preservation

In his book *On Weathering* Mostafavi writes that his aim is “to revise the sense of ending of the architectural project, not to see finishing as the final moment of construction but to see the unending deterioration of a finish that results from weathering, the continuous metamorphosis of the building itself, as part of its beginning and its ever-changing finish.”⁴⁵

The attempt to arrest the workings of nature is like arbitrarily stopping a clock at some pre-selected time. Preservation attempts to maintain a building in a state of frozen existence. Yet dying is part of the natural cycle and interrupting this cycle is untruthful. The deep-freeze solution is ultimately unrealistic. Putting the church into a glass case does not reveal the full history of the building, it shows only one stage of its life. This type of intervention aims to produce rather than discover history. The end of a physical cycle leads to a new beginning; from the ashes arises the phoenix.⁴⁶

“Even the greatest architecture ceases to be completely architecture and becomes partially landscape. Sometimes the wheel at last turns full circle; the pyramids are now wholly landscape, and Stonehenge is but faintly architecture.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Mostafavi, Mohsen, Leatherbarrow David, *On Weathering*, (The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 1993) 16

⁴⁶ Vico, Giambattista, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, (Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch) 1108

⁴⁷ Abraham, Raimund, *Unbuilt*,(Springer Wien New York, 1996) 113

Preservation can prevent the deterioration of the Covenant Church, yet it is the golden strain of time that expresses the truth of our own mortality. We need the eulogies of the sacred places, however disturbing and harsh, in order to understand that death is unavoidable. The current mentality of anti-aging perpetuates the idea that things will always stay new and therefore creates a false reality. The resistance of time by our society produces a superficial amnesia designed to nourish our desire for new products that are not significantly different from the old ones. Hiding aging through the use of artificial materials erases our origin and leaves us with an uncertain future.

Architecture once recorded the cycle of life and death but now “it has tried to pass from duration to immortality.”⁴⁸ Victor Hugo suggests that architecture has been replaced by the book. We no longer try to tell a story with architecture. It is now about the perfect image rather than the narrative of gigantic alphabets.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Hugo, Victor, *Notre Dame de Paris*, (trans. Alban Krailsheimer, Oxford University Press, 1993) 196

⁴⁹ *Ibid* 200

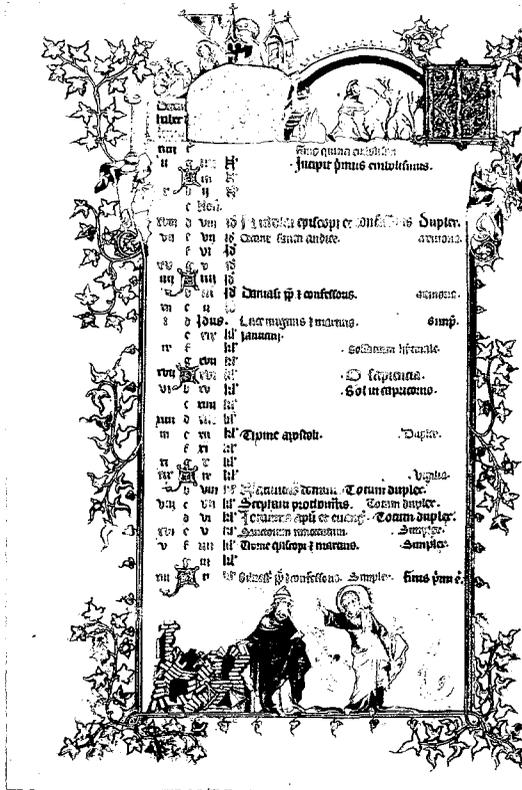


Figure 12 - The Belleville Breviary (Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale)

Source:
 (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belleville_Breviary)
 2009

In an illumination from the Belleville Breviary⁵⁰ we see a painting that expresses how tradition is passed on and shared. An Old Testament prophet is removing a stone from a synagogue. The stone symbolizes the Old Law and is passed on to an apostle so that it may serve as building material for a church. The apostle does not construct a physical building because the church is a spiritual structure. Instead of using a building to represent the church a little tree spreading its branches to the sky is illustrated. The main element of the image is the synagogue that represents the past, however the future is not clearly revealed. The juxtaposition of an

older building with a small tree growing on top of an arch manifests the essence of religious history. Tradition, when remembered, supports the future.

⁵⁰ The Belleville Breviary (Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale, MS lat. 10484, 2 volumes) is an illuminated breviary. It was produced in Paris some time between 1323 and 1326 by Jean Pucelle. A breviary (from Latin *brevis*, “short” or “concise”) is a liturgical book of the Latin liturgical rites of the Catholic Church containing the public or canonical prayers, hymns, and Psalms.

Ruins



Figure 13 – A ruin in Flintoft, Saskatchewan
Photo by author (October 2008).

Ruins are the corner stones of history. They are a reminder of earthly transience, as well as a testimony to the greatness of the past. They have been used to explain mythological origins, exemplify the achievements of past cultures, pass on moral lessons, and promote national identities.

“The past in this sense is not a specific and limited period or time over and done with, rather it can be seen as “what has come to be.”⁵¹

In 1911 Father Dionise Nichifor, a fifty four year old monastic priest from Romania, arrived at Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church in Flintoft, Saskatchewan. He obtained a homestead and built a rock house with the help of local farmers. Soon after he finished his house he was seriously hurt in an automobile accident and returned to Romania. He donated the roof of his house to a local family who were building their own home. To this day the stone walls of his roofless house remain standing. It is undeniably a ruin, yet it is also a testament to the generosity, faith, and community spirit of the people who settled in this area.⁵²

⁵¹ Mostafavi, Mohsen, Leatherbarrow David, *On Weathering*, (The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 1993) 116

⁵² *Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church*, (Flintoft, Saskatchewan, 75th anniversary 1911-1988, edited by Mrs. Karen Aussant, article) 11

Memory

I was ready to leave John's house when he said, "You asked me about the architecture of the place. Here is what I recall from my parents. The workmanship of the Swedish carpenters was impeccable. For the construction of Covenant Church the volunteers from the community made all of their decisions on the fly. My friend Henry, a second-

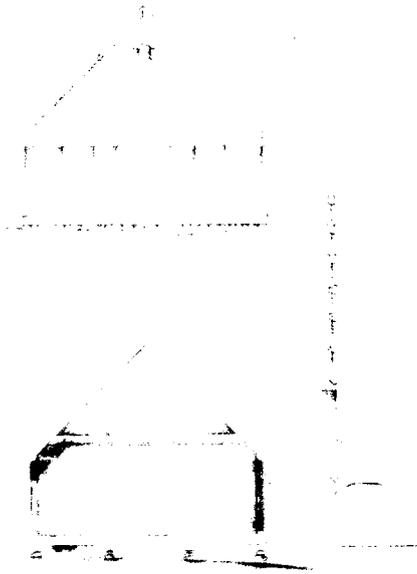


Figure 14 – Detail of Covenant Church
(drawing by author) 2009

generation settler, still looks after the grounds of the church. When they built the church the first thing they did was to gather a bunch of stones for the foundation. They just piled up the stones and then they put the floor in. Its full length was 24 feet, 2X10 joists at two feet center with the walls studs 2X4 at two feet center. The wall outside is shiplap siding. Then they put up the rafters, 2X6 at two feet center and up above four feet high. Then they sheathed the roof with shiplap. After this they put siding down below. Underneath the cedar shingles they installed felt. Tongue and groove was used for the floor, walls and ceiling. Everything was cut by hand. The nails came from a manufacturer as did the windows and doors. They used cedar shingles because this was common at the time. It

was brought in by train from the west coast.” I asked him if there were any records or blueprints from the church.

He said, “It was not like these days where we preserve things in drawings. The immigrants carried their designs in their heads, it was a part of their cultural tradition – they handed this information down by word of mouth, observation, replication, and apprenticeship. So this is why there are no blueprints.”

After a pause I asked, “John, do you remember when the last service was held at the church?”

“It was sometime in the sixties” he replied.

I asked him why the church had not been used since then. He replied sadly, “There were not enough caregivers to keep the church working and there are no young people left. In the early days people could not travel, now distance is not a problem so everyone went away.”

“So what will happen to the building?” I asked.

“We got permission for demolishing it but I would rather leave it alone and hope that the youngsters will decide one day to look after it”.

I said goodbye to John and drove to the Covenant Church. The place looked totally forgotten. All the windows and doors were paneled. Most of the building was made of cedar and was put together in a very simple fashion. Standing alone upon the landscape, the church seemed to have grown out of the land from which its raw materials came. Fallen roof shingles covered the ground.

Ricorso

When someone first encounters the Covenant Church, they see it from our present perspective, the age of people. From within this age, we tend to evaluate things in terms of utility. Using such criteria a decayed and abandoned church has little meaning other than as a monument to our rejection of the past. Like the dying church, our memory of the origin of life has been lost.

“I tell you, most solemnly, unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest.”⁵³

The seed, which in this context represents the church building, falls to the ground and dies. As the parable indicates, the dead seed produces blades of wheat containing many more seeds. In a similar manner new buildings will be born from the seed of the Covenant Church that embody its architectural characteristics and methods of construction. The new buildings will be built through *factura* and serve as places for *factura*. The Covenant Church will be reborn in two ways. First the traditional method of construction will be embedded into each newly erected building so that the character of the original building is passed on to its children. Secondly the spirit of the church will be restored through the experience of traditional activities. The process of *ricorso* involves letting the original building follow its natural cycle. By weaving the original church into

the new buildings it will be possible to create the present form of a past life, not according to the fragments that remain but according to its past life as such.⁵⁴

⁵³*The Jerusalem Bible*, (Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1966), John 12:24

⁵⁴ Mostafavi, Mohsen, Leatherbarrow David, On Weathering, (The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 1993) 64

PART IV

Project Description

The aim of the proposed project is to construct a group of buildings that will be used by visitors to make bread. Bread making is a form of *factura* that adds meaning to the architectural intervention. In the process of learning, making, and consuming, the world of objects and the world of man are reunited. An important objective of such a project is to place a unique experience into the hands of the visitors which can be passed down to the next generation.

The bread recipe that will be used combines flour, water, salt, honey and yeast. The process starts with fresh wheat that is brought to a threshing floor and pounded with flails. The threshed grains are crushed into flour in the milling house, the flour is kneaded in the mixing house and the dough is then baked in wood fired ovens. Each step of the bread making process involves methods that have been in use for many centuries. At the end of the day the bread maker stands before the church with a loaf of hand made bread. The church building, first seen as something alien and dead, is now connected to the bread that has been produced and is now seen as something that can provide a mystical type of nourishment.

Due to its central position within the circular path of the new buildings, the Covenant Church will be the focal point of the site. The master plan embodies a strong sense of

place for each function of the exercise, thus making a clear distinction between each stage of the bread making.

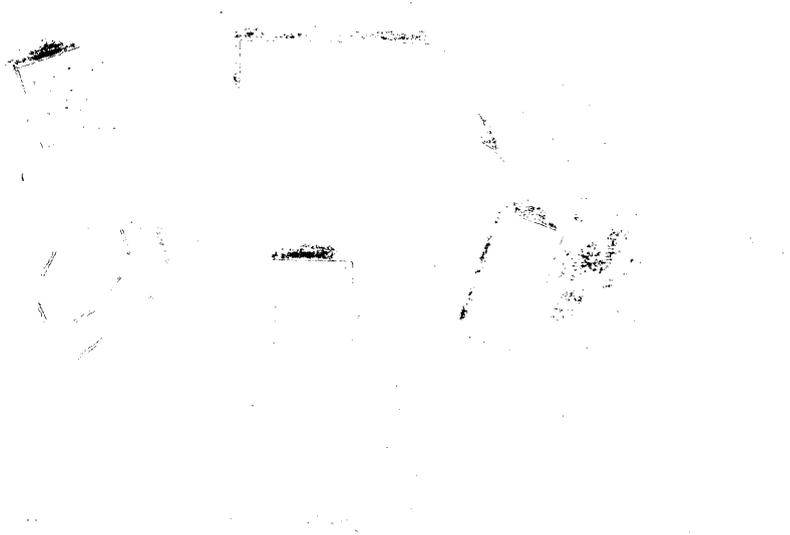


Figure 15 – Site plan of Covenant Church with northwest prevailing winds
(Drawing by author) 2009

Making bread is a circular process in that the same steps are repeated each time it is made. This repeated action emphasizes the idea that practice, work, and repetition are

necessary to keep a tradition alive. This can be seen in religious ceremonies that are repeated regularly to instill rituals that have been performed for centuries.

The Threshing House



Figure 16 - The Threshing House
(Drawing and model by author) 2009

The journey begins on a stone path that leads to a pile of wheat in the threshing house. The threshing house is located on the right side of the church at the bottom of a natural slope. At this stage the bread makers need to carefully separate the chaff from the grain, a metaphor for separating the good from the bad in their own hearts. The wheat is spread out on the hard packed earth and hit with flails. The structure of the threshing house allows the prairie wind to pass through, blowing away the useless chaff. After the wheat has been threshed the grains are collected and placed in baskets.

The Milling House



Figure 17 - The Milling House
(Drawing and model by author) 2009

In the milling house the bread maker refines the grains of wheat into flour. The milling is a metaphor for the temporal refinement that our character undergoes as life grinds away our delusions and vanities. This building is constructed on a slope that represents the rise from infancy to maturity. The floor of the building ascends towards the exit at the back wall. Upon entering the milling house through a porch one encounters complete darkness. Each bread maker is given an oil lantern and guided to a small milling station. By the light of the glowing lantern the grain is crushed into flour using hand operated mills and collected into wooden bowls. Once all of the grain has been milled, the bread makers leave the milling house through the rear exit and step out into the light of day.

The Mixing House



Figure 18 - The Mixing House
(Drawing and model by author) 2009

After milling, the bread makers arrive at the mixing house. In the center of the building is a stone well that provides fresh water. At each station there are three jars containing yeast, honey and salt. The scriptures that inspire the Covenant Church provide a spiritual meaning for each of these ingredients. Water represents eternal life, salt is the spirit that gives flavour to our actions, honey represents the scriptures, and yeast is a symbol of the kingdom of God that starts out small and eventually grows to support all life. The round shape of the mixing house and the slope of the floor towards the center emphasize the importance of the well, from which the water of everlasting life flows. After arriving the bread makers combine the flour and other ingredients in a bowl and mix them together. They then knead the dough and leave it to rise while they go and start fires in the bread ovens. Once the dough has risen it is kneaded again and left to rise a second time.

The Bread Ovens



Figure 19 - The Bread Ovens
(Drawing and model by author) 2009

Once the dough is ready the bread makers take it from the mixing house and place it into the hot bread ovens outside. In the story of John's encounter with Demeter, she tells him that the bread he is buying does not feed him. The reason for this is simple; the bread from the factory is made without faith or spirit. The bread that is made at the Covenant Church is truly nourishing for it has gone through a physical and spiritual transformation and can feed not only the bread makers but others as well.

CONCLUSION

The world of the settlers can be studied in textbooks or it can be discovered in the most powerful records of their history, namely the physical structures that stand as a testament to their continuity of being.⁵⁵ A significant part of this history belongs to their sacred buildings, whose impact flows from the power of imagination. Built on site without plans, drawings or power tools, these buildings are amazing examples of faith and determination. By revitalizing the architectural and spiritual traditions of the immigrants we open a gate of inquiry and perhaps rekindle some of Saskatchewan's vanishing heritage. This is why it is important to recall the stories that have been obscured by time. It is the memory of experience that makes continuity possible and provides a foundation for invention (*ingegno*). Some have argued that imagination and memory are nothing more than decaying sense impressions. Vico denies this claim and declares that memory is a form of thought that is vital to our continued existence. He observes that the first science we should teach is that of mythology, for it is through myth that we discover our origins.

The story of John and Demeter introduces the age of the gods during which the first men constructed analogies to explain their natural surroundings. Demeter was the bread giver and her daughter was the wheat seed that grows underground. In this age the language of

⁵⁵ Kunze, Donald, *Thought and Place: The Architecture of Eternal Places in the Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, (Peter Lang Publishing, Inc. New York 1987, Vol.2) 57

man is both imaginative and poetic. The next story takes place underneath the Covenant Church and represents the age of heroes. One of these heroes is Achilles, a warrior described by Homer as having great courage, glorious accomplishments and sublime passion. These are characteristics which according to Vico belong only to the heroic age because its vitality was not dimmed by rationality. Vico does not deny the cruelty of the heroic age but he nonetheless esteems their virtue, love and bravery. It was during this age that Christianity arrived, and it is Christianity that inspired the construction of the Covenant Church. The making of bread under the church recalls the early period of Christianity when its members worshipped in catacombs. Their heroism was demonstrated in their willingness to die for their faith. The story of the factory symbolizes our present time, the age of people, where life is dominated by criticism and rationality. Rene Descartes, the father of the modern age, developed a skeptical method of reasoning that led to the separation of the spiritual from the material. In our age everything is based on verification and the only path to truth is through axioms derived from observation. This leaves modern man facing his future with only empirical laws to guide him. The modern methods of bread production are analogous to the industrialized methods employed in architecture and other forms of fabrication. The appeal of the industrial process is its ability to cheaply reproduce a fixed model. This type of mechanical invariance eliminates the human factor from production. Vico warns that if we continue down this road of technological dependence our civilization will eventually collapse. Practical wisdom is a necessary form of knowledge. The Covenant Church project invites visitors to learn how bread is made, not through conceptualization but

through activity and invention. In making something with our hands the real world becomes familiar and we are no longer outside observers.

It is clear that in order to preserve the humanity of our traditions we should try to save buildings like the Covenant Church, yet it is not obvious how this might be done. The answer is found in the writings of John Ruskin and William Morris. They discuss the methods of architectural restoration and preservation and conclude that when trying to save a building we must be careful not to detach it from its original meaning. Most of the sacred buildings previously described have in one way or another been stripped of their true origin. Despite the efforts that have been made to arrest their decay they are today used for worship only a few times each year, if ever. The Covenant Church is also unused, however it is unique in that it is the only building that has not been restored. For this reason it preserves its full history. The goal of the proposed project is not to rebuild this church but rather to build new structures that gather people around the church to discover the truths that inspired its construction. The Covenant Church will be protected from the ravages of time and neglect without any attempt to alter it.

The activities proposed for the site are stages in the transformational process of making bread. The bread, a symbol of life, is a vessel that carries the bread maker back to the age of the gods, through the age of heroes, and finally into the age of people. Each step of the bread making is analogous to a step in the spiritual journey. The making of bread becomes a way of experiencing the divine. It is not the activities alone that determine the meaning of the experience but also the architectural and environmental realities.

Architecture carries information that brings the past to life, and all of the buildings at the site contribute to this historic exploration. The design and purpose of each house connects us to something that we have forgotten. In trying to recover the heart of a dying church we cannot use science alone, we must also encounter wonder, mystery, worship and symbolism.

We have forgotten because we have reduced reason to cause, effect, and matter. Architectural form and the spiritual elements of *factura* can be used to cure this amnesia. “It is well to have, not only what men have thought and felt, but what their hands have handled, and their strength wrought, and their eyes beheld, all the days of their life.”⁵⁶

A dying grain of wheat or a dying church can both nourish new life. New generations will be born and pass away beneath the shadow of the church but it is the death of the spirit that is truly fatal. Vico insists that if we blindly continue on our way, our age will collapse into an oblivion that is followed by the return of pre-historic conditions. We can avert such a collapse by uniting past ages with the present. The Covenant Church project aims to accomplish this by rewriting what we once knew.

⁵⁶ Ruskin, John, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, Seventh printing, 1979) 169

METHODOLOGY

The following is an outline of the different types of *factura* used in the development and design of this project.

Step 1

Visited the sites, took measurements, produced drawings and recorded interviews with the local people. All of these activities played an important role in developing an understanding of the history of each site.

Step 2

2a Used cedar shingles that had fallen to the ground from the Covenant Church to build a 1/8" model of the church. This process of transplantation (creating new life from old) was significant because it exemplifies the application of the past to the present.



Figure 20 - Church model at 1/8"=1'-0"
(Photos and model by author) 2009

2b Established a grammar of the Covenant Church building by conceptually taking apart its elements and building detail models, a full scale-corner detail, a rafters detail using a

scale of $\frac{3}{4}''=1'-0''$, and a full scale wooden pew. Through this I came to appreciate a number of things about early pioneer methods. Clearly the architectural techniques were limited by the availability of local materials, and the design had to be reduced to what was manageable. This mode of composition appears restrictive, however the fact that one must work within boundaries encourages the designer to concentrate on solutions for particular problems rather than reinventing every form and shape. Such an architectural method is dominated by tradition, but this does not imply that the folk designers are less creative.

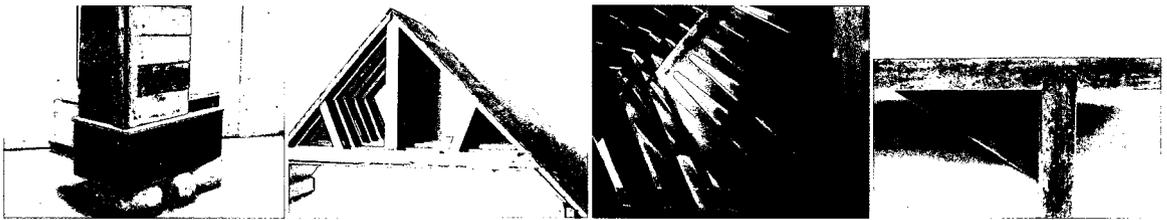


Figure 21 - Models at full scale and $\frac{3}{4}''=1'-0''$
(Photos and model by author) 2009

Step 3

For this project making bread is an essential part of understanding the process of *factura*. Each step of bread making of was therefore carefully analyzed and later implemented in the design. Several loaves of bread were made in my home using a sourdough starter rather than yeast. The resulting bread was edible but took too long to produce. For this reason it is proposed that the bread maker use yeast.



Figure 22 - Time lapse of bread making
(Photos by author) 2009

Step 4

Videos were made of the construction of the site models and the making of bread. Capturing the process of making reveals what happens at each step and helps develop an understanding of the things that are being made.

Step 5

Various drawings were made of the site buildings. The technique for these drawings was inspired by the work of William Kurelek. To help convey the experience of each house and its relationship to the Covenant Church, water color vignettes are used together with plans and sections.



Figure 23 - Prints from the paintings of William Kurelek
(Source: www.askart.com/.../william_kurelek.aspx) 2009

ADDITIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS

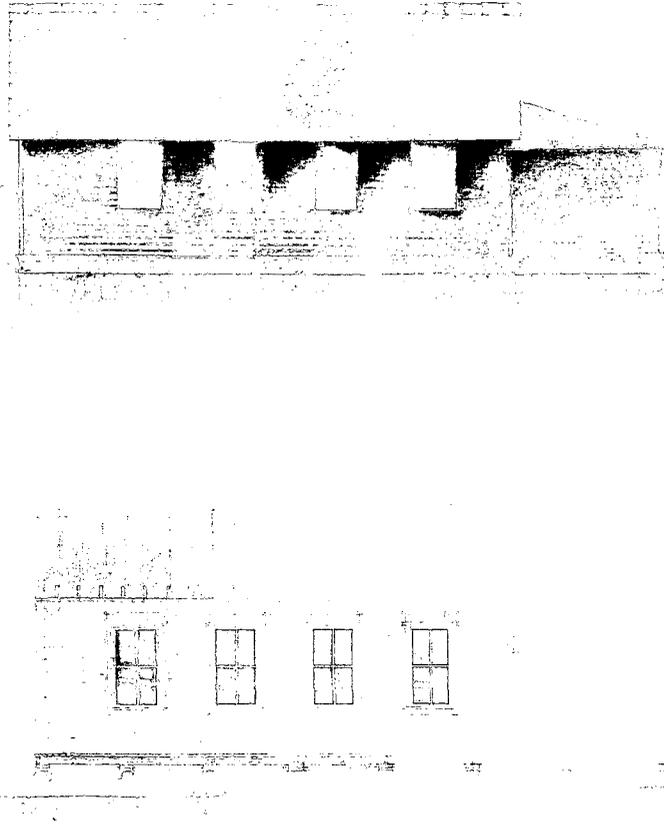
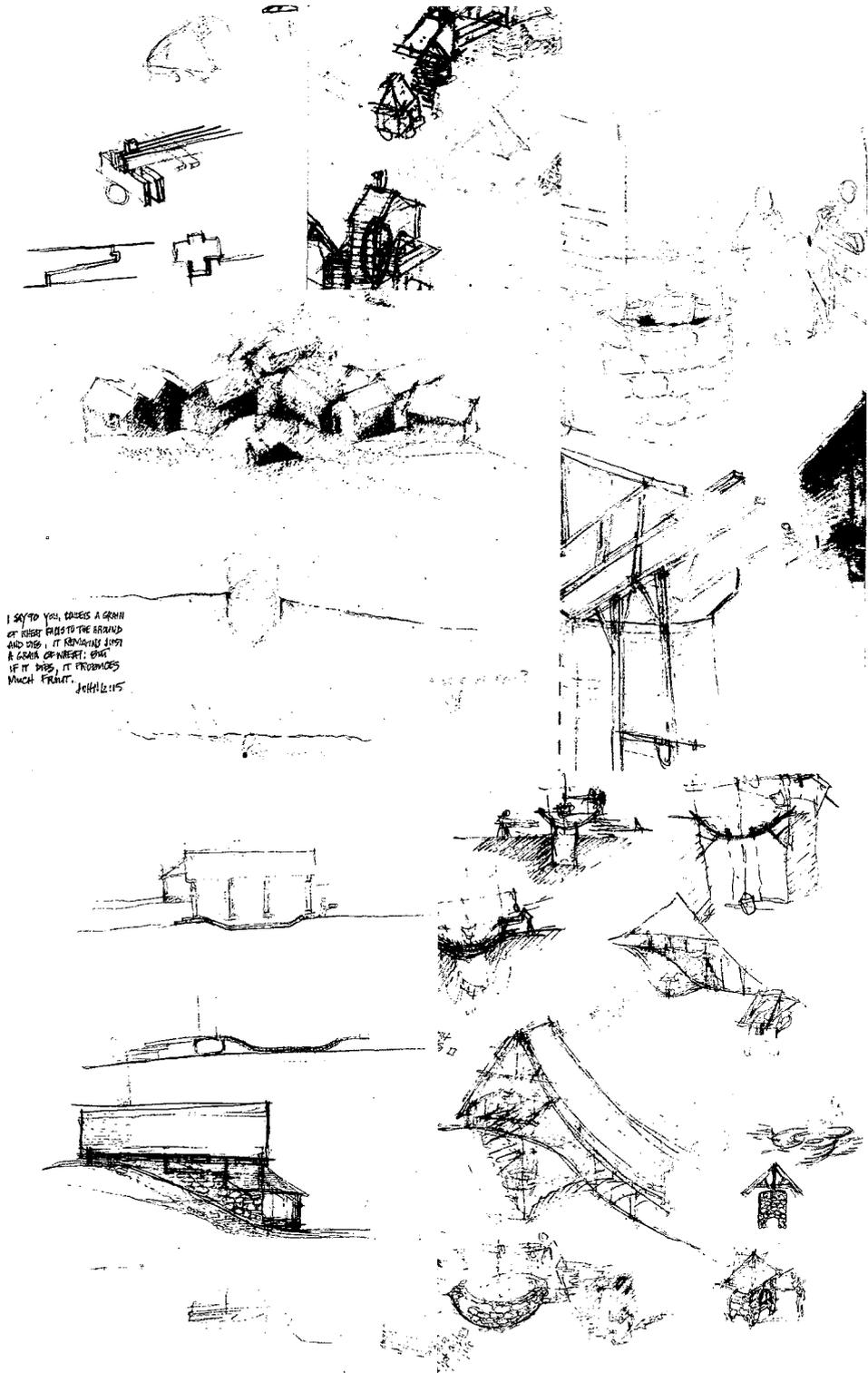


Figure 24 – Elevation and section of Covenant Church
(Drawing by author) 2009



I SAY TO YOU, WHOEVER A GRAIN
OF SUESE FALLS TO THE GROUND
AND DOES NOT RISE AGAIN, IT REMAINS UNFRUIT
A GRAIN OF WHEAT: BUT
IF IT DIES, IT PRODUCES
MUCH FRUIT. JOHN 12:24

Figure 25 – Sketches
(Drawing by author) 2009

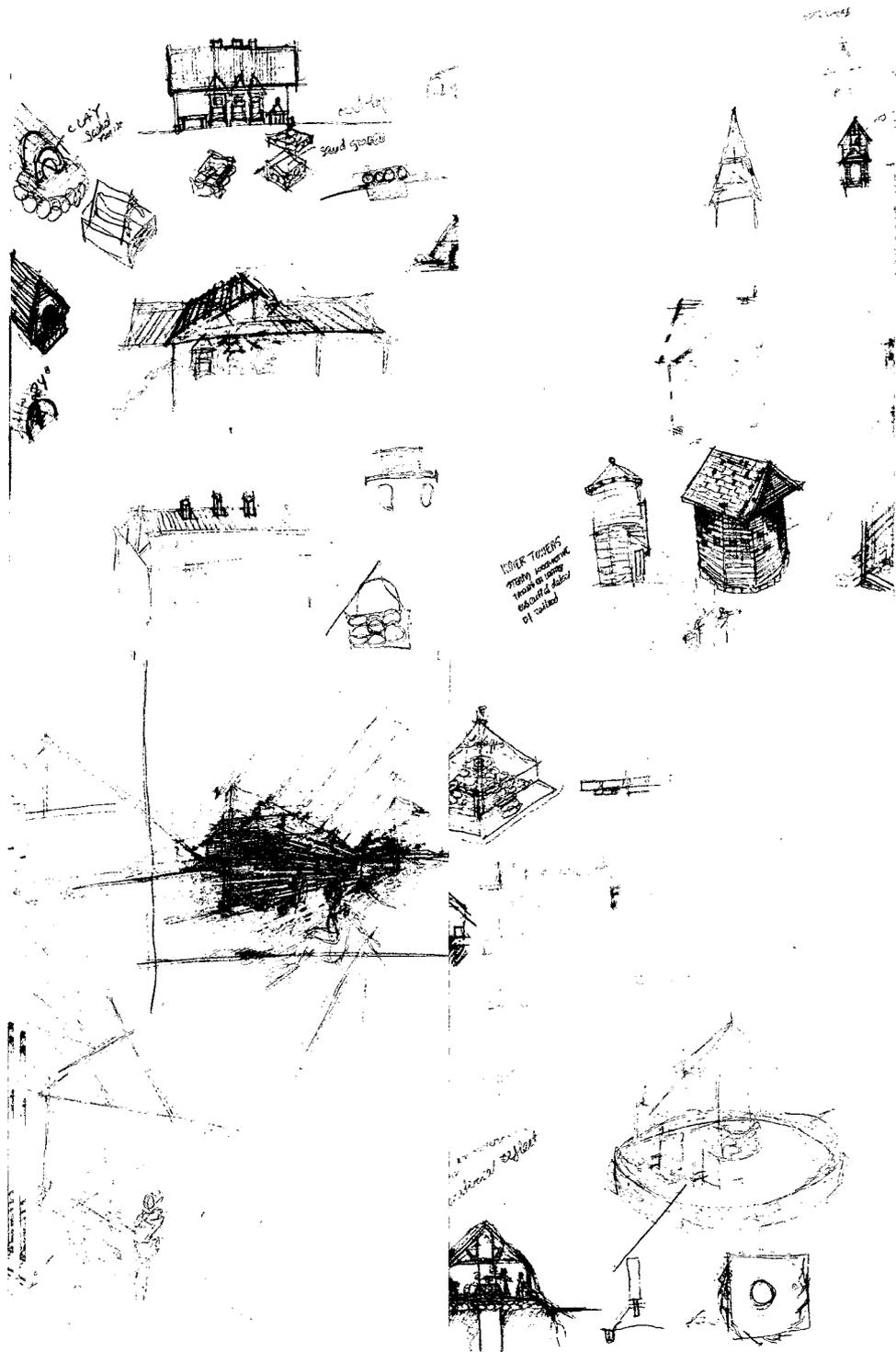


Figure 26 – Sketches
(Drawing by author) 2009

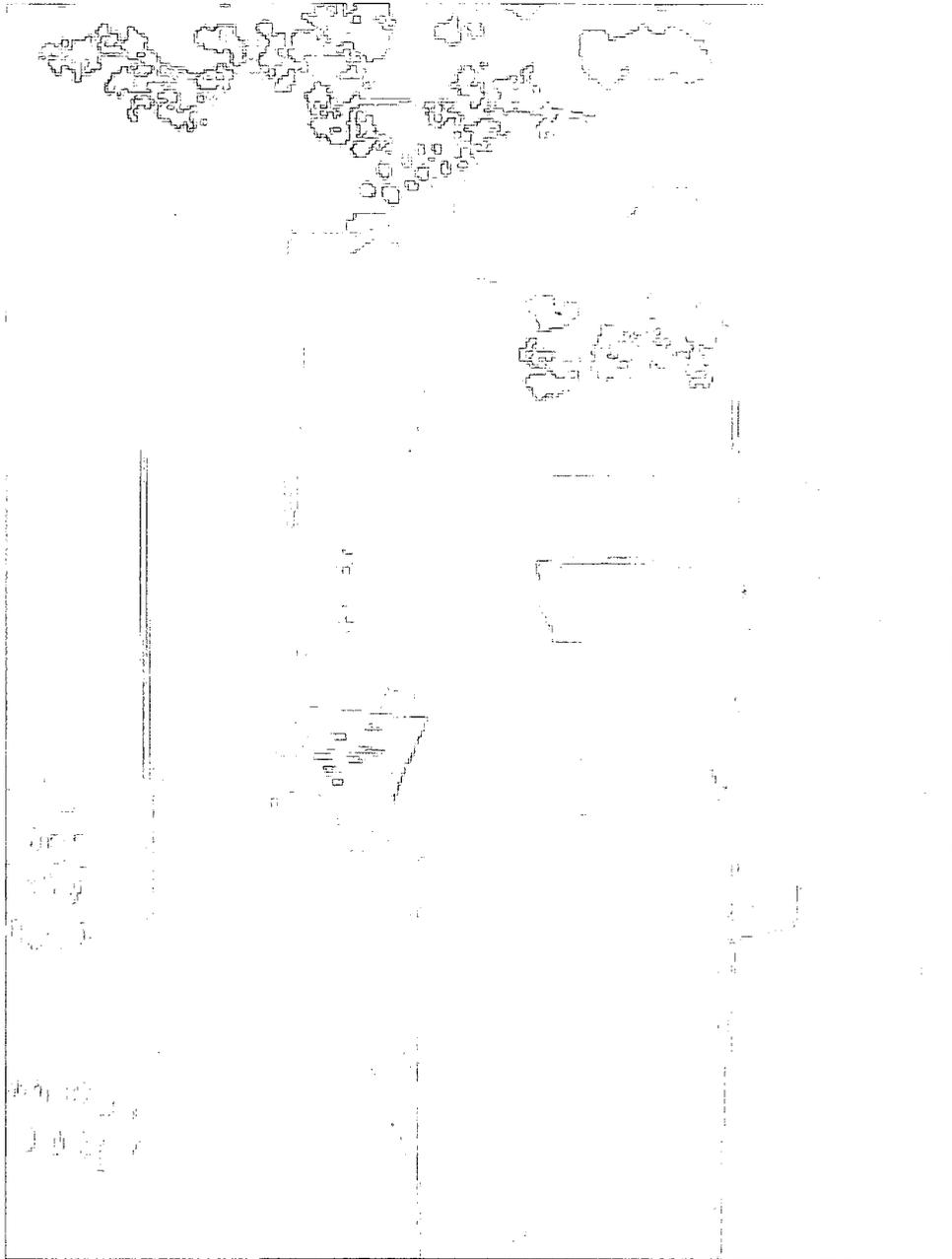


Figure 27 – Site model
(Model by author) 2009

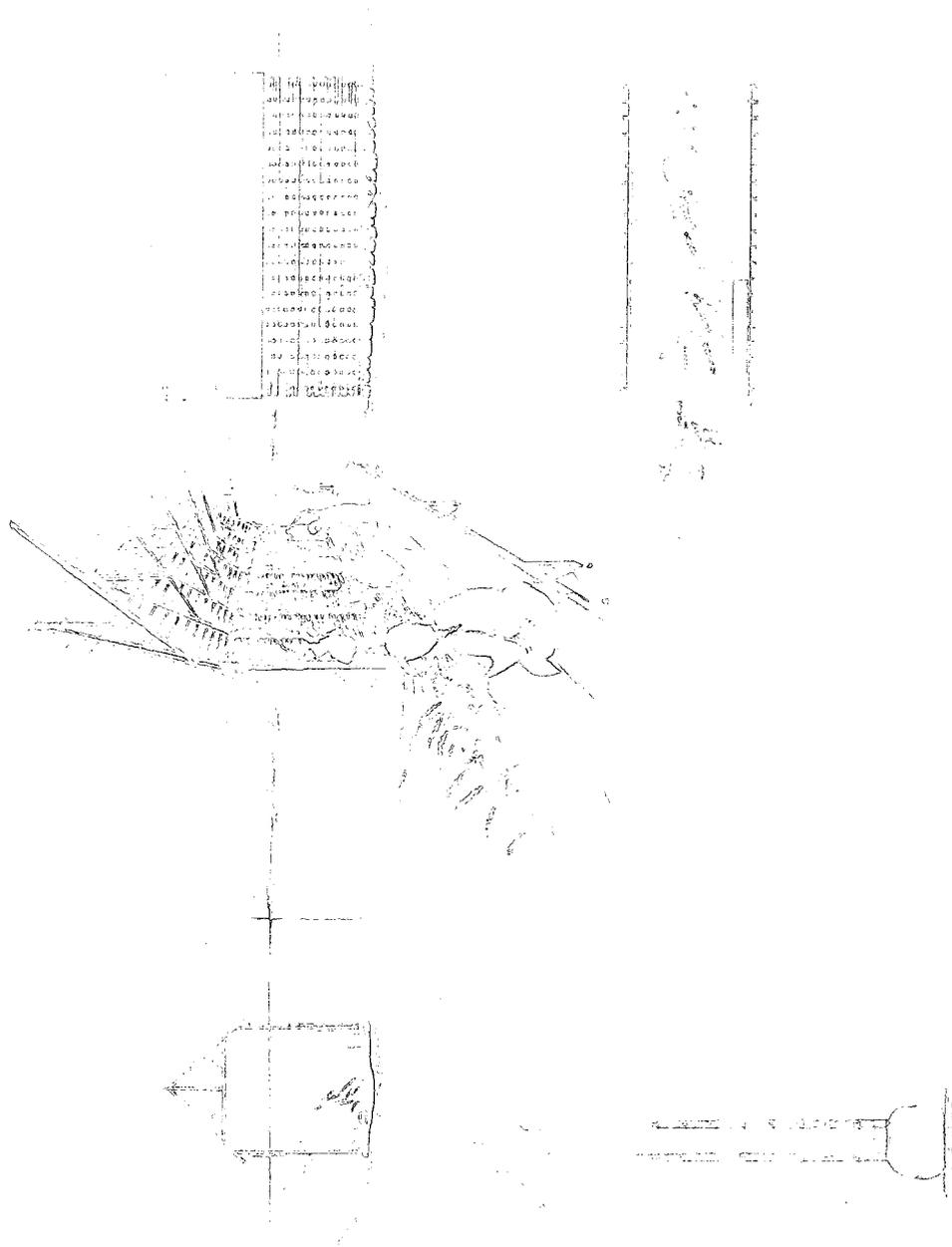


Figure 28 – Illustration of the Threshing House
(Drawing by author) 2009



Figure 29 – Illustration of the Milling House
(Drawing by author) 2009

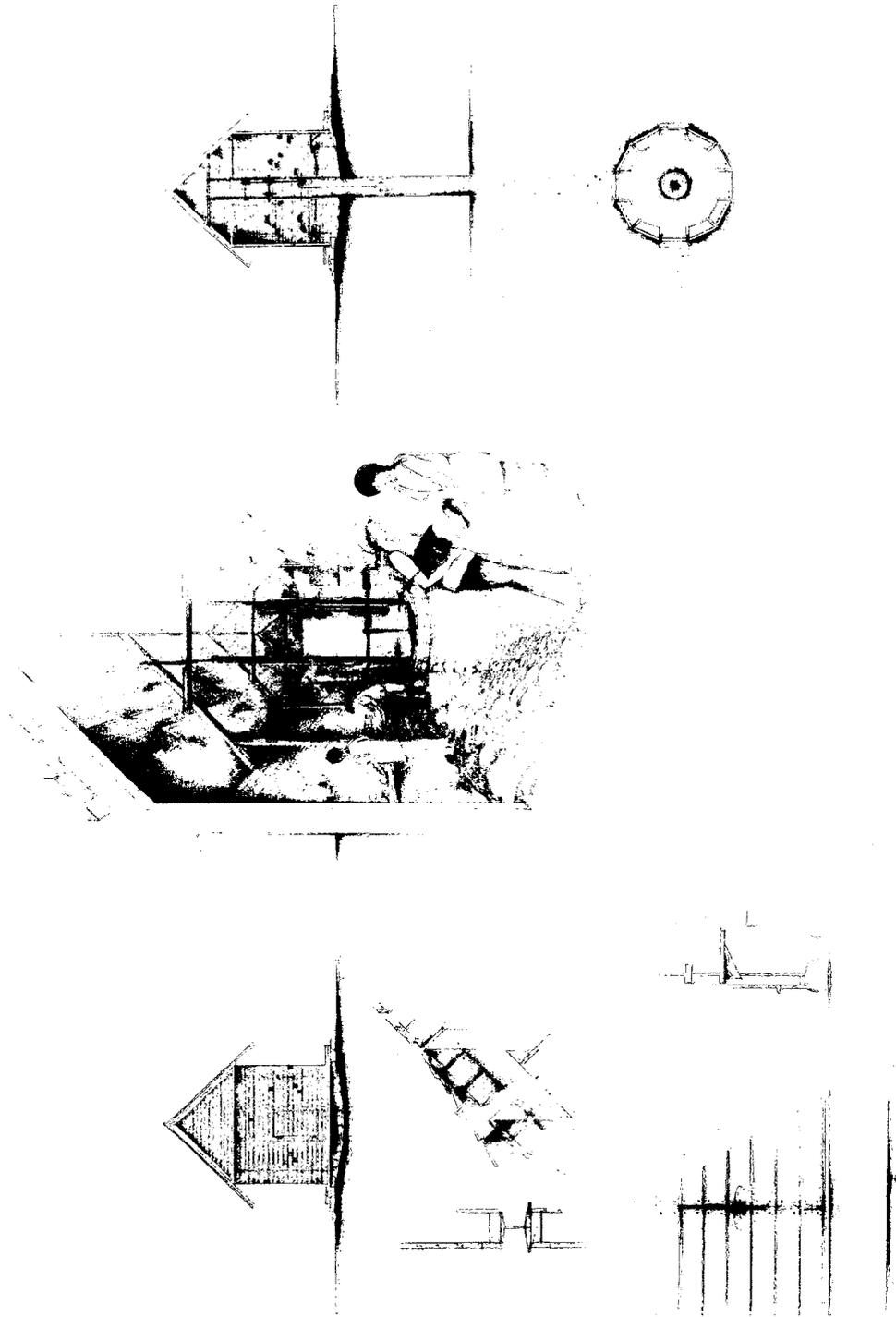


Figure 30 – Illustration of the Mixing House
(Drawing by author) 2009

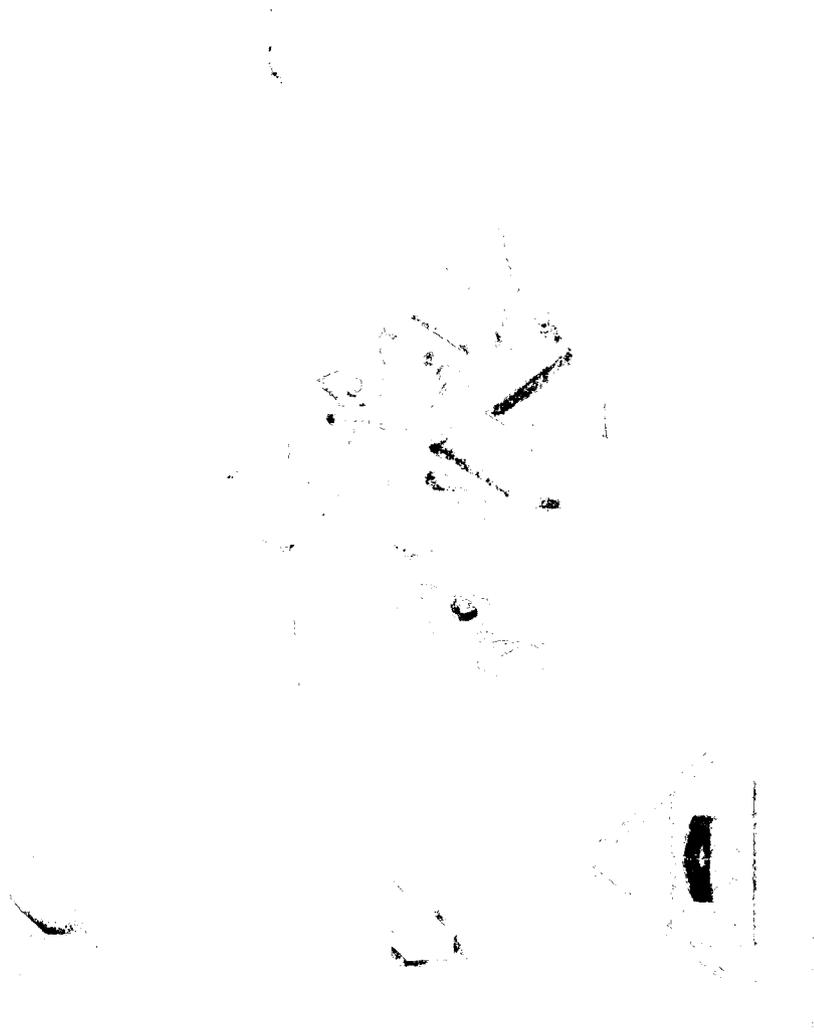


Figure 31 – Illustration of the Bread Ovens
(Drawing by author) 2009



Figure 32 – Images of the settlers

These are photos of the early settlers and of the people that I interviewed during my visit in Saskatchewan in October 2008. The recent photos are of John Cojocar, Margaret Deberham, Garnett Smalley, Lynne Johnson, Peter Veregin, Garnett Johnson, and Norman Johnson. The first five photos are from *Footsteps to Follow, A History of Young, Zelma and Districts*, published by Young Celebration Committee, Young, Saskatchewan, 1981. The rest of the photos are by the author - 2008

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