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## Conclusion

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According to the field observations in Europe and visiting the churches in some cities in France and Italy, and based on library studies and considering environmental perception of people by being in religious areas (in compliance with the questionnaire), the obtained results indicate that the elements, which divert human attention from the spiritual world to materialism, are considered as inappropriate components concerning the aim for religious spaces that is worshiping and closeness to God. Regarding the main structure of architecture, the spirituality of the space is reduced in places, in which decorations and materials have exhibiting and luxury aims and usage of numerous sculptures and mural paintings are the dominating parts of the ritual space. It seems that such sculptures and paintings and even the darkness inside Western churches are the results of previous religions, having no relations with religious instructions of Christianity. Inside churches provides no spiritual notions for people, who are affected by the magnificence of the building

after entering into them, and whom the sense of humility against the creators of the building rather than God dominates them. Location of churches in spatial places in the cities, emphasis on that, and on the other hand, the inside structures of the churches indicate the dominating power of the church authorities, reducing the divine and spiritual aspects of it. However, using windows with patterned glasses creates specific light inside the church, providing a spiritual sense for the worshipers, and it plays as an appropriate architectural part for the considered aims regarding the building. Ritual behavior of the worshipers, such as hymns and lighting candles, in places considered for such actions in churches also promote the spiritual aspects of the ritual spaces. Thus, when such ritual places become the arenas for dominating the power by the rulers, they are diverted from their considered principles, and not only are they not successful in their considered religious performances, but they also divert the attention of worshipers from divinity.

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inside the churches in high altitudes create the sense of insecurity for the worshipers. The minds of worshipers are placed in the vertical control system dominated in churches, and they find themselves within a great, high, and inaccessible special domination. By entering into this space, human beings feel the sense of humility against a great power, created by architecture of the building, although this sense cause reminding of the eminent God, since we sometimes remember the creator of the world through fear and sometimes through hope (Fig. 9).

**Analysis of the questionnaire**

Some questions were considered for this study, concerning the effective elements and components for analyzing human environmental perception regarding Western churches and the state of their spiritual feelings and perception in the considered environment. The statistical population included 26 men and women, most of whom were educated in master’s degree and PhD, who

had travelled to the West and visited mediaeval churches closely in France and Italy. The results obtained for the questionnaire, which were due to their feelings and perception about the internal spaces of the churches, are given in table 1.

In addition, the most prominent spatial element that according to them caused spirituality in the church environments was questioned, and 31% of them regarded the colored glass windows and 27% of them considered the ritual music and human choral singing during prayers as the effective factors in spirituality of church environments. In contrast, the most important factors that take humans away from the spiritual world, spirituality, and materialism in such religious environments are statues and sculptures inside the churches (according to 50% of people), and diversity of decorations in the churches (according to 38% of people). Furthermore, 23% of people considered floor and wall paintings as the effective factor for removing worshipers from the spiritual world.

Table 1. Results for the analysis of environmental perception of people from the internal space of Western churches – Courtesy of the author

| Spatial components inside Western churches                       | Spiritual perception and feeling | Non-spiritual perception and feeling |
|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Placement of the central part in a church in front of the saints | 80%                              | 31%                                  |
| Windows with colored and patterned glasses                       | 77%                              | 23%                                  |
| Placement of windows in height and darkness inside the church    | 58%                              | 42%                                  |
| Hymns and music during ritual ceremonies                         | 85%                              | 15%                                  |
| Layout of prayer seats opposite the altar                        | 77%                              | 23%                                  |
| Sculptures inside the church                                     | 23%                              | 77%                                  |
| Mural paintings inside the church                                | 50%                              | 50%                                  |
| Decorations inside the church                                    | 38%                              | 62%                                  |
| Verticalism of the internal space of the church                  | 35%                              | 65%                                  |
| Painting figures in the inside area of the church                | 10%                              | 81%                                  |



Fig. 8. Ceiling decorations in Lyon Notre Dame Cathedral. Photo: Maryam Mohseni Moghadam, 2015.



Fig. 9. Verticalism of internal area in Paris Notre Dame Cathedral. Photo: Maryam Mohseni Moghadam, 2015.

### Verticalism

“According to Burkhardt , the holy art for a traditional human is a place for getting access to the supernatural world” (Burkhardt , 2011: 17). Verticalism of the internal spaces of Western churches and long heights are somewhat emphasizing on the feelings of eminence and ascension, and on the other hand, the human being in such a space feels fear and perplexity by observing the magnificence and height of the internal spaces that are

far away from human proportionalities. “There are the two vertical and horizontal methods to be recognized for thinking and speculations. In a general view, the logic in vertical thinking is in controlling the mind, and in horizontal thinking, the logic is the mind service. Due to its nature, vertical thinking has no efficiency in emergence of new ideas; it is also quite limiting” (Dibono, 1997: 24). Placement of ceilings and domes



Fig. 7. Mural painting and sculptures of St. Peter Cathedral in Rome. Photo: Maryam Mohseni Moghadam, 2015.

crowded and diverse that attracts the viewers towards observing the floor. “All the floor of the cathedral is covered by marble mosaics, divided into 56 pieces with different sizes, including elegant visual expressions, scenes from the holy book, piety, and allegories” (Carli, 2015: 32). Ceiling decorations of some churches such as Notre Dame Cathedral in Lyon are also excessive like its floor, transformed into embossed patterns, but not all these luxuries and decorations are suitable for religious environments (Fig. 8).

#### Used materials and colors

The used materials in the internal space of churches that include floor stones, wood for prayer seats, polished marble for the walls, affect the perception aspects of individuals from the space. In Santa Maria Del Fiore Cathedral in Florence and in Siena Cathedral, the black and white combination of the wall stones create different visual aspects in space, turning the eyes in visual sequences resulted from the layout of the stones with their colors, attracting the attentions of the viewers towards the material world.

Thus, they do not create a space with spiritual and peaceful serenity

Each of the dominating colors on the internal space evokes a notion in the mind of addressees of the space. The dominating color of Paris Notre Dame Cathedral is white, evolving the spatial purity and spirituality. “White is the symbol of eminent perfection, light, cleanness, holiness, rescuing, and spiritual power. White color is the color of love and life, and also the color indicating death and funeral” (Javadi, 2014: 39).

The used colors in mural paintings and the clothes of clergies and saints also create different effects in the worshipers in religious areas, each of which indicates a different notion. “In a number of mithraeums in Europe, the Mithras cape is in violet red color, and the ceilings of the mithraeums are blue with the patterns of sun, moon, and stars, as well as horoscopes with white and gold colors. These paints were then entered into the clothes of Christian clergies and architectural decorations of churches” (Ibid). Thus, color is also an effective element on different conceptions from a religious place.



Fig. 6. Internal dark space with little lighting in Lyon Cathedral. Photo: Maryam Mohseni Moghadam, 2015.

was gradually replaced with busy and properly decorated churches in the later eras, and the main aim became showing the power of Christ and Christian governments, rather than religion and Christian rituals” (Shirazi, 2014: 10). This type of Christian show of strength within the frame of churches is in contradiction with the principle of simplicity of religious buildings that can refer human attention towards relations with God. “Makeup (painting) and sculpture have the highest ranks in the hierarchy of European arts, being called the absolute arts, while architecture is in lower order since it is based on technical necessities, and the importance of decorative arts is even less in comparison” (Burkhardt, 1991: 30). Hence, the graffiti and sculptures that are

sometimes observed in large numbers in European churches are obstacles for acquiring mystic perception in a religious environment.

### Sculptures and graffiti works

The most prominent and interesting decorations in Christian churches include the sculptures placed on the outside spaces and inside the churches, and internal mural paintings. “The figures are not only the mortal body of Jesus and the saints, considering their intrinsic and spiritual dimensions, but they also exhibit their bases and natures as saints” (Rajabi, 2013: 27). These sculptures and mural paintings with their hidden contents are sometime so numerous and great that attracts the attention of humans, and diverts the attentions towards the material world more that attracting the people towards the spiritual and divine world, transforming the religious environment of the churches towards places for visiting these constructions and being astounded about them. “The worshiping places full of arrays, images, sculptures of live creatures, and even statues of saints and prophets make human beings passive, viewers, and aliens. In fact, there is a principle difference between internal spaces of worshiping places and exhibition places. Appropriate exhibition indicates visiting horizons and human interactions with external phenomena, and on the other hand, worshiping place should be appropriate with intrinsic interactions and wilful and optional self-consciousness of humans” (Noghrehkar, 2013: 33). The example of extensive use of sculptures and mural paintings can be observed in St. Peter Cathedral in Rome, with numerous statues and graffiti, attracting the attention of humans drown in the used beauties and magnificence of these arts, considerably reducing religious aspects of mentioned constructions (Fig. 7).

### Floor and ceiling decorations of churches

The used decorations and patterns on floors and ceilings of Western churches divert the attention of human beings to themselves. In some churches like Siena Cathedral, the floor design is so

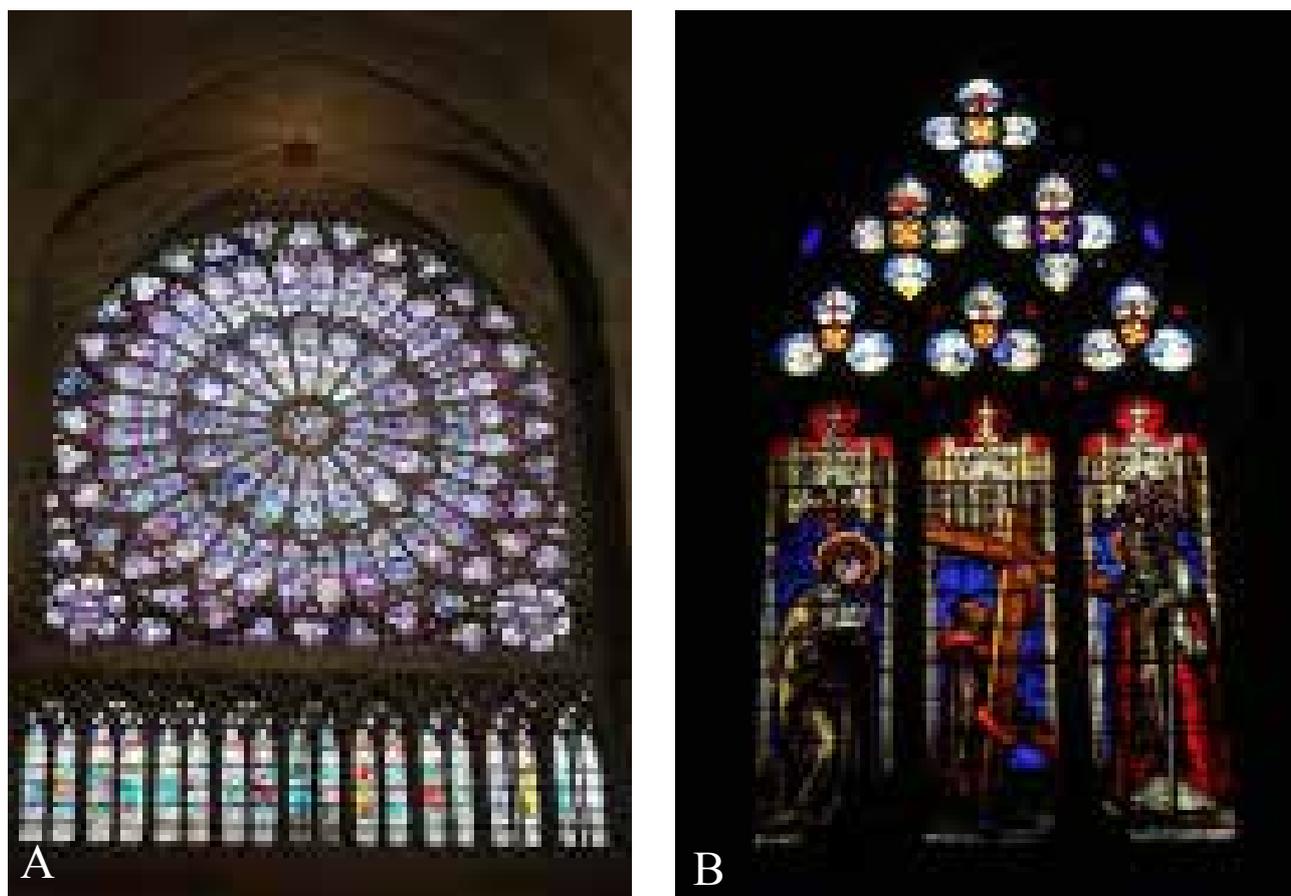


Fig. 5. Window with patterned glass. Photo: Maryam Mohseni Moghadam, 2015.  
a) Paris Notre Dame Cathedral; b) Lyon Cathedral

light and no darkness in within him. If we said we were friends, we would have lied, since we walk in darkness; hence, we are not truthful” (Bible, 2012: 619). In another place in John’s Gospel, Jesus Christ said, “I am the light in the world; whoever follows me, he will never go into darkness, and he will benefit the light of life” (Ibid: 257). Thus, church is considered as a building that is indicating the existence of Jesus Christ for the Christian worshipers. It is stated in Bible “His (Jesus Christ) body is the church” (Ibid: 516). A place should exist with light in order to provide better spiritual relations for the worshipers. However, it seems that darkness of church spaces has roots in the origins of churches, i.e. mithraeums. Mithraeums were small caves in

rocks with small windows under their roofs that used to bring little light into the mithraeum area and the nave. Thus, the mithraeums were almost dark for the cave shape to be maintained. “They were directly transformed into churches in Christian residence regions, and they had no great needs for changes due to similar functions from the viewpoints of rituals, ceremonies, and lack of “kibla” direction” (Javadi, 2014, 35).

#### **Church decorations**

Decorations in churches have created specific and effective appearances, attracting the attention of worshipers. “By officially considering Christianity and combining them with governments and politics, the simplicity of Christianity



Fig. 4. Place for lighting candles by worshiper in a church.  
 Photo: Maryam Mohseni Moghadam, 2015  
 a) Paris Notre Dame Cathedral;  
 b) Milan Duomo Cathedral

### Colored and patterned windows

“It was always tried to provide spiritual aspects to the internal spaces in the architecture belonging to the beginning of Christianity and also Byzantine architecture, to create a dreamy space, and it is clear that lighting has had a great role in this respect” (Grutter, 2009: 452). The colored patterned windows that prevent pure and direct sunlight to enter inside the church can be identified as an effective spatial element in churches, to promote the divine and spiritual aspects of the space by playing colors and lights. Light does not create the space, but it transforms that. The world is transformed into another form by the organized lights, and it is the responsibility of the architect to primarily increase the spaces and then recreate the spaces by light. The two separate stages should undoubtedly be done by architecture” (Dibaj, 2005: 49). By using Gothic rose windows at the highest height and vertical patterned windows in spaces such as altars, this architectural element is properly used (Fig. 5). “Each window with patterned glassware can be considered as an independent unit as the holy book” (Dornyei, 2011: 121).

### Darkness inside the church

“According to the religions, light has a metaphysical and holy principle, with spiritual and divine nature” (Ghodousifar, 2009: 25).

Mere usage of patterned windows in heights and with small sizes relative to the large spaces of mediaeval churches in the West creates little clearance and darkness of the internal area of the church, somehow providing mysteriousness of the internal space (Fig. 6). The created darkness inside a religious building is in contradiction with the point that we consider God from a light origin, and it does not help the spirituality of the environment. “Divine light and glory of God are not separated from each other, and light is often drawn as a conceptual interpretation of God’s glory” (Dornyei, 2011: 83).

Presence of light and its importance in relation with God and his representative on earth are discussed in the holy books of Christianity. Based on the first letter by John the Apostle, “God is the

cathedral environments more spiritual by their harmonious singing, after finishing the vocals, they go up front in an orderly queue, and their religious leader prays for them, putting something in their mouths as a blessed material. The echo of the sounds from musical instruments in large buildings with long heights of mediaeval churches wakes a state of spiritual attraction in human beings, forcing them to have inner thoughts, and since communal prayers are sung by the worshipers during playing the music, combination of musical notes and the worshipers' sounds are successful in assisting to create the spiritual and holy environment, drowning human beings in the spiritual world and prayers.

Music and Christianity in a bilateral dialogue provide creation of blessed conclusion, called "Christian music", the result that includes musical notes from one side, and indicates divine instructions from the other side" (Mahdavinejad, 2003: 102).

### **Lighting candles**

Similar to many other ritual environments, worshipers light candles in Christian churches for their needs to be met. "Burning candles remind us that our souls are always near God and his saints. The candles that are usually lit on behalf of others prove that worshipers are God-oriented and not self-oriented" (Anderson, 2003: 8).

Lighting candles in religious places indicates light, fire, and God, having positive measures, and hallowed in all the religions and rituals with its roots in old beliefs. Worshiping fire used to exist in Mithraism, and fire and light are also holy in Zoroastrian religion, Hinduism, and Buddhism. "Fire that was called 'Vulcan' used to be considered as the most important and constructive natural force, and in all its effects: in the universe and stars, in light, in stimulating the life of creatures, in the growth and development of plants on the earth, it was properly adored. In the deep parts of caves and mithraeums, fire was lit with its holy aspects, and worshipers tried not to pollute it, even in having contacts with themselves" (Kuman, 2014: 118). Places are allocated to this matter in the internal spaces

of many churches. Lit candles are observed in different semi-dark spaces of Western churches, being lit by every individual worshiper for their wishes and requests. They are effective in creating spiritual areas and indicate efforts for a type of relationship between the creatures and the creator (Fig. 4). "When the worshipers enter the church, they light a candle in the candle stick for the live people and a candle for the dead relatives and acquaintances. However, in case a live person has a specific problem, it would be better if he lights a candle for everyone. The candle light should always accompany prayer words. By lighting a candle, we request forgiveness and God's supports, while we ask for divine blessings and eternal salvation for the dead people" (Vernikos, 2013: 4).

### **Physical structure of churches**

Buildings are formed concerning their considered functions, and architectural elements are used for the design of the required areas. The architect of a religious building tries to use the required elements in creating the spiritual environment. According to Dr. Isa Hojjat in the book "Tradition and innovation in instructing architecture": "the duty of the architect of a ritual place is transforming divine realities to human perceptions, and finding materialistic instincts for spiritual concepts, and architecture is a process between the spiritual world and the material world that transforms the realities and concepts to the instinct with the material of thought, i.e. geometry, and provides reality and corporeality to the physical applicability and severities" (Hojjat, 2012: 181). Thus, an architect of religious constructions uses different materialistic tools to achieve the spiritual world, and by investigating about main phenomena, he tries to use the symbols and signs in the body of the building that leads to creating an effective ritual environment for the relationship of the worshipers on the earth with the supernatural world. If the beliefs and religious backgrounds have no roles in the structure of the religious building, no successful spiritual environment may be created.

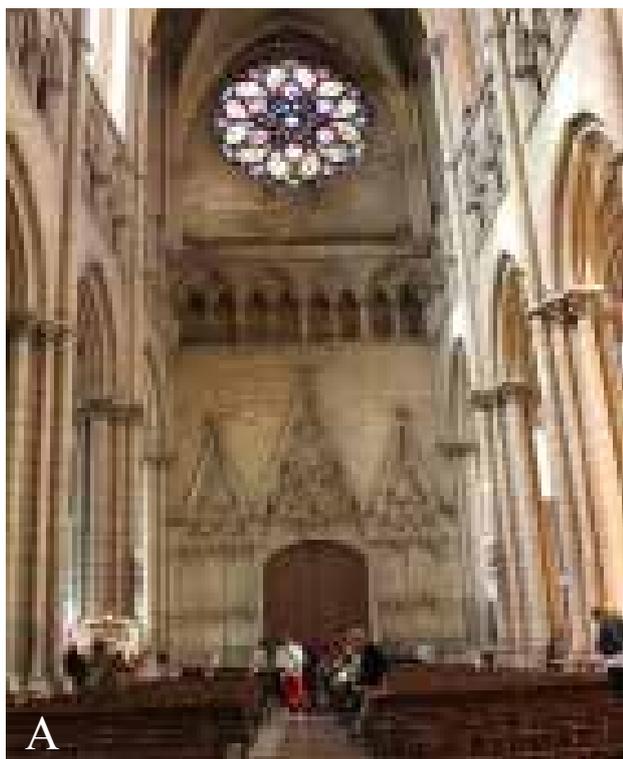


Fig. 3. Central part in a church. Photo: Maryam Mohseni Moghadam (2015)

A) Lyon Cathedral from the entrance;

B) Milan Duomo Cathedral towards the altar

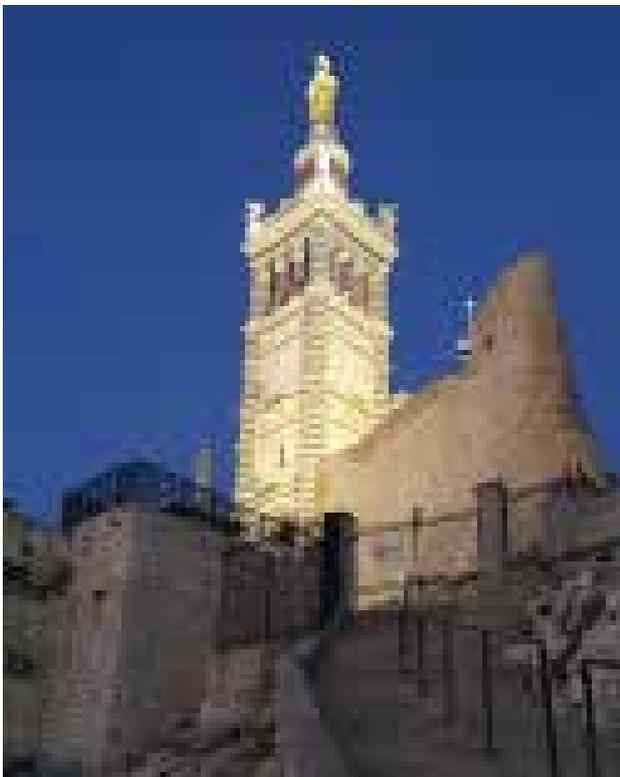
always considered as the people requiring religious instructions that stabilize their connections with the religious high ranked clergies by sermons; a sermon is a one-sided dialogue in the world of churches, which never ends. The interior spaces of churches are formed and arranged due to this relationship” (Pahlavanzadeh, 2012: 26), and such a notion in religious architecture is not practically successful in creating the sense of spatial spirituality in individuals.

#### **Effects of ritual behaviors of the worshipers**

Regarding the beliefs in people’s behaviors and the worshipers of the religion, any religion obtains external phenomena. The ritual behaviors and phenomena of people in religious spaces have useful perceptual effects on the addressees of that space. Required spaces should be allocated for executing the related ceremonies by the worshipers, for optimum performance related to the internal area of the religious building to be created. It will have more effective feelings and perceptions for the worshipers, when a religious building is designed for the people’s ritual ceremonies. Two cases regarding the behaviors and the environmental effects on the worshipers on the church space are hereby analyzed as follows.

#### **The music dominating the ritual space**

The sounds and songs played in the church space during ritual ceremonies can be effective on worshipers’ morals. “Prayers are closer and holier with holy music; it freshens the worshipers, promotes the mental unification, and endows better ceremonies for religious rituals. This holiness involves religious and spiritual dimensions, and both dimensions should be considered in cultural basis” (USCCB, 2007: 65). During playing the religious and devotional music in mediaeval churches, the collective prayers together with that dominates the spiritual feelings on the church environment. When after the prayers by the saints in their places, religious hymns are sung in Paris Notre Dame cathedral and Lyon Notre Dame cathedral, and the worshipers stand up and hum the hymns in chorus and make the



Figs. 1 & 2. Notre Dame Cathedral, Marseille.  
Photo: Maryam Mohseni Moghadam, 2015

and symmetry that its' conducting to the cathedral indicates the dominating power of this building and emphasis on the church. It ends up to the square in front of the cathedral, which emphasizes the importance and the dominance of the cathedral building with the symmetry of elements around the square and surrounding porticos on both sides of the square. The notion obtained from this approach is mainly reflecting the power as compared to clergies, since it induces the sense of being underestimated to the addressees.

### **Central area inside the church to induce the sense of power**

“Each church has three entrances, symbolically indicating Father’s God, Son’s God, and The Holy Spirit’s God” (Pahlavanzadeh, 2012: 27). To enter the internal space of the church, the praying human is located in the central area after passing through the subordinate doors, and the central axis of the praying place is towards the location of the saints and the altar (Fig. 3). “The place for the saint of saints or the church altar that is considered as the turning point and the target for the church space, such that all the stations are towards it, the worshipers stand on that direction, all the tables are ended towards it, and being in the plan view of the cross” (Pahlavanzadeh, 2012: 25). This type of emphasis on the central axis in the internal space of the church, the end of which is the location of saints for instructing and guiding people, indicates the sense of power and their domination on people. “Direction conducts people towards a spatial position in Christian architecture. All the powers and directives indicate that holy-communion (Eucharist), situated in a special place, should be properly considered for achieving the God’ grace” (Fathi Azar & Hamzehnejad, 2014: 55). The emphasis observed for the church power in the civil community in spaces such as St. Peter Cathedral in Vatican is somewhat continued in the internal space of the church, and the determined places for the worshipers from the entrance to the altar, where on both sides are the layouts of the praying seats, increase the emphasis. “The believers gathering in the church are

the world of perception. Though being in a holy place, human tries to have more prominent and effective spiritual relationship with the supernatural world and the creator.

**Church architecture:** Many catholic theorists consider the church as the holy ethic. Their reason is that if Jesus Christ is the God's holy ritual, then church is the holy ritual of Jesus Christ. As a holy sacrament, church has outdoor and indoor aspects. The outside or the structure of church indicates its outside organization, which is a necessity, without which the church cannot be viewed. Its internal part indicates the presence of Jesus Christ among the faith, hope, and love of worshipers to him. They consider church as a symbol of Jesus Christ. According to the Roman Vatican interpretations, church is a symbol and a tool for unison with God and merging of all human beings with Jesus Christ. Thus, the church architecture in Christianity was a reflection of beliefs, and by constructing luxurious churches and cathedrals with extensive decorations, Christian community tried to establish the sense of power on ordinary people.

#### **Policy of the rulers under the dominance of religion and church**

“Mutual cooperation of reigns and political powers with church has visualized different aspects of royal glories and governance and its presence in the field of Christian faith that church was its undertaker. The eternity of reigning was justified and interpreted under the eternity of divine orders” (Norouzitalab, 2005: 80). The influence of political power in the church has caused these buildings to find specific urban identity, and after considerations, the track of the governing powers can be seen within the buildings physical structure in the urban area. Mossolini, the leader of fascist Italy during World War II, tried to return the catholic people to political lives for them to support the fascism laws by agreeing on establishing the state of Vatican and considering Catholicism as the national religion, in order to strengthen and reinforce his own dominating power by emphasizing on religion and the church to obtain the support of all the required

people. Emphasis on church buildings as well as magnifying its power in different European cities has been done differently, in order to provide different concepts from it. The emphasis on the power in the inside space of churches has been done in another way, and the considered analysis of the physical structure to inspire the dominations and powers is hereby as follows:

#### **Placement of church in the urban space to inspire the feeling of power**

Mediaeval churches in European cities have prominent magnificence, attracting any viewers to their grandeur. Location of these buildings in urban areas and conducting of streets to them and locating them can create a different feeling to the ritual spaces. “Perception can be considered as a purposeful process, during which the individual receives environmental information, and it is derived from the structural cultures and values dominating the human communities. In this regard, the environmental perception is the process, by which human receives the required information and mental notions from the surrounding environment. Environmental perception is accompanied by the human knowledge from the environment” (Pourjafar & Sadeghi, 2008: 98).

Religious buildings were located on top of hills or mountains in many religions, and worshipers used to feel closer to their creator by going to higher places, notifying the superiority of the religious place compared to other places. For instance, Notre Dame Cathedral in Marseille in France is located on top of a hill and its dominance on the city is quite tangible from the top of the hill. This cathedral can be observed from different places, lanes and streets of this port, as a prominent building on top of the city, and the dominating power of the church on the city can be observed at the time of being in the cathedral and visiting the city areas and buildings in the down skirts (Figs. 1 & 2).

The other example of the considered churches for their locations in the urban areas is St. Peter Cathedral in Rome, situated in the central part of “Constitution St.”, the street with specific order

## Introduction

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Various factors about the religious space should be considered to analyze the spiritual effects of that space on the human beings. Religious buildings have a common intention in different religions, which is creating a space for worshipping and praying; it is done according to the religious beliefs to any religion, and it is emerged in exclusive forms. However, the common aim causes humans with any religion to be affected by the spiritual space by entering into the religious building. Architectural elements of a building are used in such a way to maximize the spiritual effects to the addressees of the construction, conducting the users towards the considered performances. “The eternal forms of the holy art include divine inspirations; all the other art works are inspired from the spiritual personality of the artist. Religious art usually ignores the aim of beauty, and its beauty originates from the spiritual reality, and hence, from the exquisite codified and figurative aspects and the uses for sacrament ceremonies and mystical observations, and the personal non-evaluating factors of personal elegance and taste are merely considered as subordinate factors” (Schwan, 1993: 97).

Western churches belonging to mediaeval period are magnificent and grandeur buildings, being quite distinct from other buildings in the urban areas of those eras. The magnificence in the physical structure of a building indicates the dominance of the construction on the community, for the considered performance. Religion governed the Western community in that era, and considering higher levels, politicians used to dominate people in that era by relying on religion. Thus, supremacy and domination sometimes emerged in the church, which led to disorders of religious and spiritual performances of the addressees, while with religious idealism the considered buildings had better and more appropriate performance for people.

To analyze different factors affecting the spiritual feelings and perception of individuals by the spiritual spaces of Western churches belonging to mediaeval period, a classification was done under the subject: “Policy of the church in the shadow of religion, people’s religious behaviors in churches, and physical structures of the churches”, and the related factors about the subsections are investigated.

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## Hypothesis

Wherever the decorations, patterns, sculptures, colors, and materials are beyond the ordinary balanced levels, providing luxury-oriented and scenic aspects, and when the church becomes the tool for imposing political power of the government authorities, spatial structure of the church is not considered to be successful in creating religious and spiritual spaces, and the main tasks are forgotten within the shadow of dominating policies and luxury dominations, and the church spatial spirituality is faded away. Only when the church body is formed according to religious instructions and ritual behaviors of praying people, it results in a religious and spiritual building that leads the attention of human beings towards the supernatural world and prayers.

## Theoretical Principles

**Religious architecture:** A religious building is a place for the praying of the believers of that religion, and the more holy symbolic shapes and patterns derived from the religious principles are used, it causes theosophical and ritual behaviors of the users. Church spiritual spaces conduct the worshipers towards spiritual and virtual world by the Christian architecture. “In an allegorical form, the church image indicates an imaginary expression of the beliefs in Christianity; church indicates the place of human beings, God, and Jesus, revealing the access way towards superior positions” (Fathi Azar & Hamzehnejad, 2014: 54). Similarly, the same attempt is done by other religions via religious spaces and the art of architecture becomes an effective tool for reaching

# Spiritual Perception Resulted From Religious Environments of Mediaeval Churches in the West

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## Abstract

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As the Christians' religious and meditation environments, mediaeval churches in the West have a specific magnificence and grandeur, always being considered as prominent urban landmarks. With the used elements in them, the internal spaces of churches have exclusive characteristics, transforming them into holy places for the prayers of Christians during various centuries. The research hypothesis indicates that the architectural elements used in designing a religious place are successful, when they are advancing towards the religious and believing resources related to the building, and when the political factors, luxury and trappings are the dominating aspects of the building, it cannot create spiritual and religious space for the praying people entering to the place. The aim of this study is to analyze and investigate the spiritual and mystic effects of architectural elements and religious ceremonies of Christians in the Western churches with regards to the field observations, environmental perceptions, and expanding the subject with studying the related topics. Method of collecting the information to develop this study was field information from the Western churches during a scientific/research trip to France and Italy, and analysis of the findings, library studies, and collecting information via questionnaires given to the people that have closely observed European churches. The result of this article indicate the views of Eastern people, who have been in the Western churches for the first time, expressing their environmental perceptions and spiritual feelings about a Christian religious place.

## Keywords

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Western churches, Spirituality, Christianity, Architectural elements, Environmental perception.