It Was and It Isn't:

A Rhetorical Exploration of Simulacra in Emerging Church Vintage Worship

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Abstract

Ironically, a new vintage movement of worship was being taught in a certain strand of the emerging church movement. Dan Kimball, pastor at Vintage Faith Church in Santa Cruz, California, established his teachings to reach the postmodern generation absent from seeker-sensitive churches in a text called *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations*. This text suggested many elements, or symbols, for worshipers to include in vintage faith worship gatherings that would connect with the post-Christian culture. Eight of these symbols were chosen – *the band*, *technology*, *video screen broadcasts*, *life-stage groups*, *ancient structures*, *light*, *symbols of the faith*, and *artistic displays* – because of the vintage connection Kimball desired to reinitiate into current worship trends. Each of these symbols had entered into one of all of the four stages of simulacra established by postmodern theorist Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard argued that a misrepresentation of sign would lead to mismanaged meaning and create a falsified reality in the new environment of the sign. Baudrillard's theory was established as a workable methodology to be used even in the religious discipline. Baudrillard's work connected rhetorical analysis with practical application in the vintage church, worshippers protect meaning through established honest contextualization of the vintage sign in new environments.

Keywords:

Dan Kimball, Vintage Faith, Jean Baudrillard, Simulation, Emerging Church, Representation, Honest Contextualization

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the professors, colleagues, and friends who have invaluably enriched my life and scholarship through *conversation*. Your words and ideas have pushed, prodded, wounded, healed, encouraged, and inspired me. This is to you and for you, but may it inspire us to change the world.

**It Was and It Isn't:**
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# Chapter 1 – Jean Baudrillard and a Dangerous Religious Experiment

"God exists, but I don't believe in him. God himself doesn't believe in Him, according to tradition. That would be a weakness. It would also be a weakness to believe we have a soul or a desire. Let us leave that weakness to others, as God leaves belief to mortals."

– Baudrillard, *Cool Memories II* 81

"God is not dead, he has become hyperreal…"

– Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 159

"The order of the world is always right – such is the judgment of God. For God has departed, but he has left his judgment behind, the way the Cheshire Cat left his grin."

– Baudrillard, *Cool Memories I* 4

"Enjoying the sign instead of using it is the perversion of human beings. For the only enjoyment is of God and the only use is use of the sign (Saint Augustine)."

– Baudrillard, *Cool Memories II* 59

Jean Baudrillard is not an enemy of God or religion. God certainly is not afraid of him and religion does not recognize Baudrillard as an adversary or opponent. This is largely because religious circles, in particular evangelical Christianity, fail to recognize Baudrillard as useful to anything in their mission. Baudrillard has not been added to the black list that no respected Christian scholar would read. His name is not in the conversation. Religious studies and

Baudrillard have had little contact in previous studies. Proof of this is that many evangelical Christian scholars currently reading this study may have never encountered the name of this eclectic, philosophic, postmodern, French intellectual poet-thinker. Even describing Baudrillard in a sentence becomes a challenge because little is known about his early experience before his work as a professor and ultimately his love-hate relationship with America. Living off the land he criticized for having nothing behind its expansive rise to power in a postmodern framework, he was perfectly content in the desert surrounded by the American cultural phenomenon – the fast food restaurant. While a furthered discussion of this man and his theory will follow later, the fact still remains that Baudrillard and religion are like two blind and deaf men living in the same apartment for years oblivious to the other's presence. What is needed, is a mediator to introduce the two.

In this study I hope to find answers, but it is not limited to just these questions. At the onset of an exploration, the explorer does not completely understand where he or she will end up, but he or she does know which direction to head. In this study I will be asking questions that will lead me concerning the effectiveness and validity of using Baudrillard as a workable method of discovering truth in Christian phenomenon. There will also be questions about individual elements of vintage faith worship settings and their simulation implications. Lastly, this study will ask questions about the future implications of this study and how it can be used as a model to further evangelical scholarship.

From the selections of Baudrillard's writings above it is seen that he is not afraid to refer to the Divine although he does not call God by a more specific name. If he does not fear the discussion, why should religious rhetoricians and Christian scholars back down from the dialogue? Baudrillard's concept and four-step typology of simulacra may be a useful tool for

religious rhetoric if understood correctly and applied likewise. The goal is to examine Baudrillard as a valid scholar and simulation as a cohesive yet elusive theoretical tool to examine current trends in vintage Emerging Churches. I will accomplish this by discussing the elusive elements that all scholars must combat when using Baudrillard's work, showing the usefulness of the bulk of Baudrillard's work despite the questions of his character, extending Baudrillard's work as a rhetorician, and forecasting heuristic possibilities of simulation in religious rhetorical studies of Dan Kimball's vintage faith worship gatherings. First, a discussion about the challenges every rhetorician faces while using Baudrillard and an introduction to Baudrillard is in order.

## Paradoxical Simulation

Baudrillard deals with the topic of writing as elusively as he deals with the methodology of simulation. First, a definition of simulation needs to be discussed. Baudrillardian scholar Rex Butler gives the most definitive definition of simulation saying, "…For the first time in Baudrillard's work there is a detailed following through of the fundamental paradox of simulation that if two things resemble each other too closely they no longer resemble each other at all" (35). Simulation is the idea that signs and symbols used to represent a real object or ideal become warped with use and end up being like the original without being like the original at all. Simulation occurs when the referent and representation become more alike and a new reality is established.

This is the principle of silk plants. The representation of a live plant is obvious and silk plants are often preferred because the owner no longer needs to worry about the problems and inconveniences that come with owning a real plant. The simulation begins to spiral out of

control as the manufacturer of silk plants supplies "better" replicas for the demand of the consumer. Over time, consumers consume and demand cheaper and better materials that look more like the original. Some silk roses even come with "water drops" on the petals made of a translucent plastic or glue. With a new genre of plants well established, the silk object is no longer a representation but a simulation of a previous reality. It's a new creation. It's an entirely new object molded to the image of a previous object with little in common with the original. The fact that one silk plant can be judged as better than another is proof of the absurdity. Silk plants looking more life-like is not a better representation of the real, but a proof that the market has achieved another simulated reality creating an entire genre of silk plants resulting in its owners having pity for the owners of the real because real plants come with real work. The silk plant is a singular example of simulation in a simulation rich culture.

Writing is a difficult medium for Baudrillard. Within the written word, things have to be said as definitive truth that may only be assimilated knowledge of fractured things that will create a new reality once scripted in permanent type. The combining of fractures creates a new reality that writing cannot duplicate. The paradox is that life is not duplicated in writing for it is impossible to capture it entirely. Writing does not even attempt to completely duplicate life. Baudrillard says, "You can talk of things so much that they end up materializing in your life: simulation, seduction, reversibility, indifference… In this way, writing ends up preceding life, determining it. And life ends up conforming to a sign which was initially quite cavalier. This is no doubt why so many are afraid to write" (*Cool Memories I* 202). A logical question that follows this argument is the validity of a written discussion of simulation. If simulation is truly valid and that which tries to duplicate the real (writings of simulation) is not really the real (simulation in life) then is the referent worth the simulated discussion? The only conclusion that

will serve as the foundational premise for this study is that a writing of Baudrillard must be taken for what it gives the reader and for what the reader can sift out as valid. Rhetoricians are given the tireless job of sifting through his writings to find where the tension of this paradox does not implode in a final-staged simulation. Perhaps this is the reason why so many authors find it a "new" task to summarize what he was "really" trying to say. The pun of this real begs the question of the validity of the real.

Butler is one such theorist that gives credit to the works of others like Mike Gane, Douglas Kellner, Gary Genosko, and Charles Levin in attempting to summarize the works of Baudrillard. However, Butler comes to the conclusion that another book is needed that "reads Baudrillard on his own terms" (15). According to Butler, many other theorists have taken an external look at Baudrillard's works giving them meaning in comparison and application of the sign. His text tries to look at the texts from an internal perspective that leads to "reading it only in its own terms, completing it as it were and risking giving it a wholeness and coherence it might not have had before us" (16). Butler's attempt is noted as a valuable resource giving new light to a well-traveled path, but he still finds similar paradoxes in discussing simulation. "The analyst of simulation, therefore, is subject to the very rule he or she analyses. If the fundamental law of simulation is that we cannot come too close to the object represented, this is also true of the analyst's attempts to represent simulation itself" (Butler 26). What are rhetoricians to do with these questions but to conclude that the interaction between text and application is a worthy study? To see simulation in life is a better proof of its existence than elongated and exasperated discussion by multiple theorists that claim they have the final and concluding word on all things Baudrillard. Exposing simulation in action will be the greater goal of this project, not another newly worked wording of Baudrillard's concept. A correct understanding of Baudrillard's

simulation is needed, but rhetoricians must wrestle with the tension keeping simulation from imploding on itself, as it becomes part of a methodology to study communication texts. If the writings get too close to the real it may distort reality to the point of fractured simulation destroying the bulk of the work accomplished.

## The Ever-Present Simulation

Simulations are in no short supply around us. The paradox exists between simulated reality and the textualized concept. Michael W. Smith says in *Reading Simulacra*, "Everywhere around us the real is being (re)produced and (re)processed as simulation – from compact disc music, which digitalizes and analogue model for sound, to cybersex (an interpersonal experience in the form of an electronic transmission), to virtual visitation and voyeur programs that allow us to "be" anywhere in the world via computer uplinks" (2). There is an ever-present simulation that combats Western culture in all aspects. Simulation is ingrained so deeply into our culture that we cannot escape its influence. American culture is not based on a real culture; it is a mosaic of other cultures combined into a new reality. It is the borrowing of another time and space and accepting it as American because America now controls it. Baudrillard's travelogue, entitled *America*, discusses the ever-present simulation of American culture as it represents nothing, a new reality – a final and great simulation. Baudrillard says:

> I want to excentre myself, to become eccentric, but I want to do so in a place that is the centre of the world. And, in this sense, the latest fast-food outlet, the most banal suburb, the blandest of giant American cars or the most insignificant cartoon-strip majorette is more at the centre of the world than any of the cultural manifestations of old Europe. This is the only country which gives you the

> opportunity to be so brutally naïve: things, faces, skies, and deserts are expected to be simply what they are. This is the land of the 'just as it is.' (*America* 28)

America is a production-oriented society built on consummation of the object as signification. Baudrillard's theory of simulation is ever-present. Smith continues this thought, "Our postmodern culture is saturated with commodity signification (clothes as signs of wealth, soft drinks as signs of youth, and cars as signs of status). In this pervasive consumer culture, where individuals 'will to signify' (and anything is possible; just turn on the TV), Nietzsche's belief in the art of 'self-creation' is dead" (4). Our culture is saturated in the commodity, production, and exchange of new realities through sign. Baudrillard's analysis of an ever-present simulation in America becomes more relevant no matter how difficult it is to capture in written or spoken word. As rhetorical critics we must wrestle with this paradox to make sense of a reality-starved culture. "What results is a hyperreal culture of pastiche and reprocessed images and texts from the past. Furthermore, the speed at which history and culture are reduplicated leaves us with no grounding, no reference point, no origin for judging what is real, and no finite or objective perspective, only simulacra" (Smith 5). The result of a media-centered, reproducing, highly informational culture is an ever-present simulation.

In fear of driving the point of the ever-present paradoxical simulation and the difficulties it presents too far, I hesitantly conclude with Mike Gane's remarks on Baudrillard's journals. At a time, Baudrillard turned to publishing journals, written as fragmented musings combined in no logical order. He wrote *Cool Memories I*, *Cool Memories II*, *Fragments*, *Cool Memories IV, Cool Memories V*, and *America* all in a journalistic style. Gane, talking about *America*, says, "For Baudrillard it seems that it is not now fruitful to think of travel journals in relation to actual experiences, for writing creates its own unique world. But for readers the relationship is

interesting… Does Baudrillard also keep a diary against which the published journal is a mythic simulacrum?" (5). Writing creates its own unique world where reality cannot be completely duplicated and the duplication can never capture reality. This paradoxical phenomenon that would seem to argue its own implosion is still worth exploring. However, a delicate and accurate discussion of the possibilities of a simulated reality speaking truth into new venues will be a challenge that needs more support. For adequate support, a discussion of Baudrillard's background and the questions of his character must be addressed.

## Baudrillard the Man

On first reading Jean Baudrillard in the spring of 2005 his obvious place to me was wrapped in a white coat with unusable sleeves crossed and buckled in the posterior. A French thinker and philosopher writing on postmodernity and the falsifying of reality seemed to make little sense. Describing Baudrillard, Carlin Romano said, "Like a French Ann Coulter with stumpy legs and nicotine-ruined lungs… Baudrillard stalked fame by making outrageous declarations he knew to be false. In *Fragments* and other collections of interviews, he brayed egotistically about his brilliance while admitting he made up quotations in his scholarly work" (par. 4). However, guidance and new understanding of the Main Street, USA simulation application enlivened my curiosity. Application was the baby in the bathwater. This paper is not to defend Jean Baudrillard as a role model but to pull the truth from a text to create the framework for rhetorical application, despite the fact that it is impossible to completely remove an author and his ethic from his principle life work.

One of the daunting questions facing Baudrillardian critics is what led him through his years of early adulthood to maturity? Foss, Foss, and Trapp summarize what most critics know,

"Baudrillard was born in Rheims, France, in 1929. His parents were civil servants, and his grandparents were peasants. He was the first in his family to earn a university degree, majoring in languages, philosophy, and sociology" (300). The irony of Baudrillard being born in 1929, the greatest implosion of Western consumerism happening the same year, cannot be overlooked. Gane notes that he was born under the sign of the Lion just after Black Thursday (1). Baudrillard says later, "My grandfather stopped working when he died: a peasant. My father stopped well before his time: civil servant, early retirement… I never started work, having very soon acquired a marginal, sabbatical situation: university teacher" (*Cool Memories II* 6-7). This information, his early years, is widely known in the academic field. However, not much is known of Baudrillard until 1966 when he took a job teaching sociology at Nanterre where he stayed for twenty years (Gane 1). There are still mysteries about this man that were never addressed before his death. Gane says:

> We know nothing about his early maturity for example, apart from the fact that he fled from his studies, and never entered the *grandes écoles*. He reports having been politicized in the Algerian war period, influence by Sartre. He wrote for Sartre's *Les Temps modernes*, but was he in the Sartre circle? Did he do military service? Born in 1929, he was almost 40 when his first book was published. (8)

Questions about Baudrillard's maturing years may remain unanswered without a renewed interest in his work *and* life. After 1966 he developed a robust academic career based on the same interests he held to his entire life: the object, consumerism, and the mediated social order. Baudrillard is quoted in another Butler text saying, "Nothing begins as a project. It was never a decision or a choice between this and that… It was all a metamorphosis of one into the other… But, fundamentally, I have had the same idea from the beginning. We all have just one idea all

our life" (Foss, Foss, and Trapp 300). If this is true, Baudrillard's one idea has morphed into a variety of disciplines from mediated communication to sociological reform to photography to pop culture poetry. His biography does not read as completely as desired, but this man is still to be respected for the significance of his *one idea*.

Baudrillard's 1981 primary text titled *Simulacra and Simulation* contains extremely graphic imagery that would be edited from most "R" rated films. The first words in the text are a quote from Ecclesiastes that does not exist in Scripture. It is a blatant lie that would turn off most observant readers if they did not critically explore Baudrillard's use of literary device. This feigned verse supports his primary idea of simulation that feigning something that is not real creates a new real "without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 1). The critic that weighs through the murky waters of French Intellectual[1] writing and finds truth in Baudrillard's theory of Simulation finds truth that transcends conservative Christian barriers of polarized acceptance.

Baudrillard's death on March 6, 2007 has sparked a flurry of published obituaries. Some strive to summarize his works[2], some celebrate his brilliance[3], and others attempt to destroy his contributions[4]. Baudrillard has created tension in the academic community by not adhering to

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[1] Romano negatively continued, "More than any other modern French 'master of thought,' Baudrillard exemplified the calculated strain in French academic culture that elevates a handful of thinkers in its lucid, elegant language to superstardom precisely because they perform the dance of opaqueness best" (par. 11).

[2] See Steven Poole, "Jean Baudrillard." The Guardian 7 Mar. 2007. 13 Sep. 2007 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/obituaries/story/0,,2028464,00.html>; and "French Thinker Baudrillard Dies." BBC News 7 Mar. 2007. 13 Sep. 2007 <http://news.bbc.co. uk/2/hi/europe/6425389.stm>.

[3] See Andrew Hussey and Jason Cowley, "Jean Baudrillard." New Statesman 14 July 2003: 33-35. Academic Search Premier. EBSCO. Liberty U, ILRC. 12 Sep. 2007; and Thor Halland, "Symbolic exchange." Economist 31 Mar. 2007: 18. Academic Search Premier. EBSCO. Liberty U, ILRC. 12 Sep. 2007.

[4] See Carlin Romano, "The Death of Jean Baudrillard Did Happen." Chronicle of Higher Education 23 Mar. 2007: B9. Academic Search Premier. EBSCO. Liberty U, ILRC. 12 Sep.

hard-line academic standards. Academia has little tolerance for someone with incoherent doctrine or hypocritical tendencies. Somehow the academic community disregarded these personal flaws and blatant character issues in favor of gaining a postmodern or post-postmodern prophet. Analysis of Baudrillard is often filled with subjects about which he wrote and not what he tried to say (Romano pars. 12-14). It is difficult to pin a man to his word when he intentionally pirouettes around direct assertions.

Despite negative opinions by many scholars, my argument is that Baudrillard may have been more cunning and deceptive than most usually believe. The thesis of simulation is proven in the fact that he feigns intelligible writings with disregard to words and their meanings in a society that tolerates such nonsensical writings and still finds a way to finalize them in publication, perhaps this is poor editing or a love of the elusive. Either way, academia has reached the simulation of knowledge. Baudrillard is both prophet and proof of this. Once one is tagged as an intellectual, Baudrillard would argue that anything could be feigned. It is the fourth-order simulation containing "no relation to any reality whatsoever" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 6). Romano finally concludes that Baudrillard's writings are a spectacle of a society's obsession with postmodernism and in 50 years they will be extinct, after the ability to parade his antics for payoff has ceased (pars 14 and 20). Unfortunately, Romano's criticism reveals the same spirit of polarized thinking that causes conservative minds to itch and break out in hives when postmodernists are legitimized. A deeper reading of Baudrillard is necessary to find the truth woven into *Simulacra and Simulation.*

Unlike Romano, I believe that Baudrillard was a critic and intentionally mocked the discipline he supported. Julie Burchill says of Baudrillard in the *Sunday Times* in May 1993, "At

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2007.

times, the silliness can mutate into sheer audacity and almost bring the trick off" (Gane 7). She concludes, after discussing a part of Baudrillard's text that she claims was her own creation, that he was "part visionary and part con man" (Gane 8). His life emulates this quotation in many ways. Some believe he was a brilliant master of French Intellectualism, like Butler, and others, like Romano, would rather see his works burned in a public bonfire. I conclude that a better reading of Baudrillard is necessary to see past the obvious flaws in character to decipher, as Burchill did, between prophet and swindler. Baudrillard is the great proof of simulation. He embodied the one idea.

Assessing His Work

The importance of Baudrillard's work is not what he said, but what he meant to or did not say. His elusive style and morphing ideas lead to misunderstandings and misconceptions. I have fallen into the same temptation that Gane refers to as quiet assessments of a difficult subject. He says in 2000:

> In fact there is as yet no analysis of Baudrillard's writing which is adequate or altogether convincing. The real problem has been the temptation either to make a premature critique which simply misses its target by striking at the first objectionable idea – failing to see the complex theory as a whole and therefore leaving it effectively unexamined – or, to start from a sympathetic reading of a single theme but to fail to grasp the whole. (24-5)

To reduce the theory of simulation to a simple four-step typology or three stage simulation of the symbolic order, counterfeiting, production, and ultimately simulation is to simplify the general idea into a workable methodology reducing the purpose of simulation into a functionality for

academic study. This technique turns the spiral of simulation further.

Smith exemplifies the created reality of television families on shows like *The Brady Bunch*, *Home Improvement*, or *The Family Guy* as feigning family relationships and displaces the reality of a genuine family. He says, "As viewers wax nostalgic and posit their families as reflections (simulacra) of *The Brady Bunch* referent, reality is replaced with the emptiness of a TV representation" (Smith 116). My family doesn't look much like the Brady, Taylor, or Griffin family. So, which is real? Are they all real? Are any of them real? How do we find the real? The theory and idea of simulation draws a connection between life and the sign, but simulation becomes real as the sign comes closer to the real and can no longer represent or distinguish between the two, creating a new reality.

Paul Hegarty says in *Jean Baudrillard: Live Theory*, "His theory of simulation, which underpins all his thought of the past thirty years, was seen as politically apathetic" (2). Simulation is actually a culmination and metamorphosis of many ideas, perhaps Baudrillard's one idea as referred to earlier. "The irony," Smith continues, "if that's what it is, is that the world increasingly looks like Baudrillard's idea of it" (2). The proof of simulation is in the display of simulated life and cannot be reduced to the phases of the object as seen in multiple texts. Baudrillard outlines the Three Orders of Simulacra in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* originally printed in French in 1976 as the counterfeit (Industrial Revolution), production (industrial era), and simulation (current code-governed phase) (50). He reiterates these stages and adds a precursor in an entire work devoted to the subject, *Simulacra and Simulation* printed in French in 1981, as the reflecting, masking and denaturing, masking the absence, and a pure simulacrum (6). Other theorists also discuss the successive phases of the sign and some say that a final stage of simulation emerged in Baudrillard's later writings. Hegarty says:

> Simulation, as theory and key problematic, never goes away in Baudrillard's work. It underpins all later work on the virtual, the event, the disappearance of reality, the various illusions about history. It does change slightly, however, with the addition of a fourth order of simulacra (after those of the counterfeit, or production and of simulation), and this is the fractal. Gane claims that this is a genuinely new stage (*In Radical Uncertainty*, pp. 22, 57-62). (63)

The discussion and disagreement about this fourth stage is apparent between Baudrillardian critics. Hegarty explains the stage, "The new fractual dimension(s) is one where value becomes arbitrary: random and fixed at the same time. This means that all can become political, but not properly so, all can be sexual, but not fully, all can become economic or aesthetic. All of this occurs at the same time, and it becomes impossible to separate out previously discrete areas of human activity" (64). The fourth stage of simulation seems intrinsically close to the third stage of a pure simulation. Butler sees the same problem with the fourth order of simulation noting that Baudrillard says in *The Transparency of Evil* that it is in fact no different from the third order (46). Butler sees no use in distinguishing between the third and fourth order and neither do I as a non-methodological Baudrillardian critic using simulation as a structured rhetorical tool.

The strength of simulation is in the discussion of terms as they morph into a concept. A brief exploration of the new motion picture *Into the Wild* directed by Sean Penn, based on the book by Jon Krakauer will help us to understand the usefulness of the four-step typography listed in *Simulacra and Simulation* and the danger of using simulation as a concrete methodology in future studies. But first, a solid definition must be given. Butler gives the best summary of theory and terms. He says:

> But if 'The Orders of Simulacra' is a history of simulation, it is also an analysis of its logic. In it for the first time in Baudrillard's work there is a detailed following through of the fundamental paradox of simulation that if two things resemble each other too closely they no longer resemble each other at all… This should not surprise us, for, as we have tried to argue, the paradox of simulation Baudrillard discovers is the same as the paradox of representation, Baudrillard's investigation of simulation is part of a much longer debate about the nature of representation. (35)

The fundamental difference between representation and simulation is what makes the discussion of simulation even possible. Deciphering between a representation and a simulation becomes crucial when observing society. Baudrillard explains the difference, "Such is simulation, insofar as it is opposed to representation. Representation stems from the principle of the equivalence of the sign and the real (even if this equivalence is utopian, it is a fundamental axiom). Simulation, on the contrary, stems form the utopia of the principle of equivalence, *from the radical negation of the sign as value*, from the sign as the reversion and death sentence of every reference" (*Simulacra and Simulation* 6). Representations are equivalent to the real. Simulation occurs when the representation draws farther away from the actual object causing it to break from reality introducing new sets of meaning that were not originally present in the pure symbolic reference. There is not a defined moment or characteristic that signifies when an object has broken from reality to produce a new reality. However, this is where the usefulness of Baudrillard's four-stage typology of the signified reveals a workable yet fluid framework for assessing rhetorical text.

Butler shows that when the simulation grows out from the representation it actually takes

on a form drawing closer to the representation and not farther away. The degree of this closeness between the real and the simulation Baudrillard defines as seduction. Butler further explains the paradox:

> Indeed, what is crucial to realize about simulation is that it is not finally distinguishable from that second term we will be looking at here, seduction, and in a way is only another version of it (as seduction is only another version of simulation). The two are respective sides of the same phenomenon. What is this phenomenon? *It is that paradox of representation we spoke of in our Introduction where, if the copy comes too close to the original, it no longer resembles it but is another original.* There is thus an absolute limit to how close a copy can come to the original while still resembling it, or the copy only resembles the original insofar as it is different from it. (23) [italics mine]

An object achieves seduction, in the common use of the term, as it becomes attractive to the consumer using it under the impression that they are using the real object, but it is only a simulated real. A copied, represented symbol cannot ever perfectly duplicate the original real. This will become obvious in our discussion of people venturing into the wild after seeing the movie by the same title.

*Into the Wild* goes something like this, as none of us can know the complete story. The story of Christopher McCandless starts at his death. He was a "prince" born into American money, but chose the path of a pauper venturing into the wild of Alaska seeking to find himself and adventure that ultimately lead him to his untimely death and possible isolation from the rest of history. Although McCandless died privately and unknown to the rest of the world he was not forgotten, and is posthumously now a hero for lonesome adventurists seeking to embark on a

similar mission going into the wild and finding much more. Four months after his journey began his decomposed body was found by a moose hunter with journals, excerpts, and possessions he last had inside a bus in the middle of the Alaskan wilderness.

Jon Krakauer wrote the original book, *Into the Wild*, about the life of McCandless after tracing the story of his life backwards to his family through all the people he met along the way to Alaska. Sean Penn took the widely popular text and created a motion picture that was released under the same name September 21, 2007. McCandless' adventure ends as others embark on similar journeys. The official webpage (intothewild.com) for the movie release has two heading options entitled "experience" and "adventure." Under the experience tab online views can take a virtual tour of the path McCandless took into the wild. The adventure tab explains a contest *Into The Wild*, the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), TravelWorm, and Lonely Planet TV has created. Contest rules state, "Submit a 2-minute video of a moment where you felt truly free or connected to nature and you could win an amazing wilderness adventure courtesy of NOLS" (intothewild.com). Not only can people read the book and watch the movie, but also they can now create their own adventure and record it to submit for a prize.

*Into the Wild* is a fascinating and intriguing adventure text reflecting the true perils and dangers that McCandless faced while venturing on his Alaskan Odyssey. However, the text is not without outside influence. As McCandless' life is explored, Krakauer admits that there are sections of the text rich in with his own insights on exploration. This fate is inevitable. Likewise with the movie and a director's influence on editing and experiencing the script. The new cover of the updated book has a still shot from the motion picture with "McCandless" sitting on top of the bus where he died in the middle of the wilderness. In the minds of the reader, such a picture is supposed to represent what would have happened in an ordinary day in the wild. Turning the

cover to the first page, the reader finds an actual copy of a self-portrait taking by McCandless and left in his camera with belongings at his final resting site. The book, the movie, and the cover all represent what happens when duplication ceases to be representation.

The obvious application from a methodological Baudrillardian standpoint is the successive phases of simulation. Krakauer counterfeited the actual journey when he wrote the book, Penn produced a movie in the phase of production that is different from the book making it a widely seen phenomenon, and NOLS has created a simulated existence closer to that of the original journey by McCandless where videographers can earn a prize by submitting similar journeys as they go into the wild. Also, when the movie was released Anchor Books released a new cover for Krakauer's book and "piggybacked" advertising increasing book and movie sales. In this scenario, the book has exchanged places with the movie in the stages of simulation.[5] Methodologically this is a good argument if simulation were that simple. The question that muddles this argument is whether or not the phases hold against criticism. I would argue that Krakauer may have not only created a counterfeit of the original journey, as we would commonly use the term, but he created a pure simulation that does not completely refer back to the real journey of McCandless. Things begin to blur because the definitions and terms are negotiable in a postmodern argument like this.

Instead, a deeper comparative discussion of simulation and other communication theories is needed to find out what Baudrillard would say about new phenomenon. I will start the discussion as a religious rhetorician using a discussionary approach between simulated environments and Dan Kimball's practices in the Vintage-faith Church ideal (a part of the Emerging Church Movement). More background is needed to understand the possibility of

[5] Idea originated from Dr. Michael P. Graves in a personal conversation.

completing such a project. Discussion of Vintage pastor Dan Kimball's work and Baudrillard's theory is inevitably beneficial resulting in useable conclusions for this generation and future generations.

## Research Questions

There is a tension that ensues between representative and simulated symbolism. Although the value of such a study is justified, the following questions remain: How does one distinguish between representations and simulations? Ultimately, what does it matter if both representations and simulations produce the same results? By synthesizing major communication theorists' views and their connection to reality, it can be concluded that environments can be symbolically destructive. This is the difficulty of looking at symbolic usage through the lens of simulation. The critic applying Baudrillard to these contexts must decide where environments are a symbolic representation and where they have begun to transform into simulated environments, a pure simulation itself. Baudrillard's only distinction between the two is the difference between representation and simulation.

By analyzing these environments, the researcher will unlock their meaning for consumers of the texts. If environments have the potential to be both reality shapers (constructive) and reality violators (destructive) then an accurate understanding of symbolic usage is necessary. All environments communicate something, and within the walls of the church it is critical that representations communicate truth and not deception. Is not apathy and ignorance on this matter a disservice to those under the influence of these environments? When those with power cease to understand their influence, elements of deception begin to weave into the fabric of reality creating dangerous norms. Simulation will be applied in an attempt to decipher if the critic can

learn anything from studying vintage faith worship elements and if these elements are in fact forms of simulated representation.

Therefore, the following questions will be explored. Questions of validity and effectiveness are prominent in this study:

RQ1: Is it possible to apply the theory of simulation to the vintage faith worship context?

RQ2: Does the application of simulation to vintage faith worship elements explain changes in meaning through symbolic simulation?

In this chapter a brief discussion of the difficulties of using Baudrillard and simulation was laid a framework for the next chapter of literature review and constructed methodology. The next step is addressing similar communication theories that construct reality before discussing Baudrillard's theory that deconstructs reality and other literature that is foundational to this study.

# Chapter 2 – A Comparative Literature Review

The following literature review recognizes common theories in the genre of communication studies relevant to the purpose of this study and shows how Baudrillard's theory of simulation differs. Primary to understanding the following is an agreement of terms.

## Defining Terms

The term "constructive" is used throughout this project to mean anything that builds. A constructive theory would then build with narrative materials that would lead to an end. Some constructive theories build a combined shared reality and some build a new reality by discovering new phenomenon by sharing experience and reality. In this study, "constructive" will not be polarized to either definition, especially the beliefs of extreme constructivism. Constructivist like Jean Piaget, Seymour Papert, and Idit Harel would conclude that knowledge and reality are established through the assimilation of shared reality. Extreme constructivism says that knowledge is only passed through information that must then be assimilated into reality without the possibility of absolute truth being passed through shared narrative. While there are some extreme constructive views in the constructive theories used, but the reader may assume that the word "constructive" is not limited to the beliefs that Piaget, Papert, and Harel have promoted. A better metaphor for the use of the term "constructive" would be that of a builder. The framer uses all new materials to frame a house, but he's using a proven method to form the skeletal structure that will support the new building. Constructive theories build in this way, and are not limited to extreme views of constructivism.

Destructive theories of sharing narrative are used in a similar way. Deconstructive ideas

rise out of the philosophical move to postmodernity. The scholarship of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Martin Heidegger, and Baudrillard advocate this school of philosophy. Deconstruction may be found in many disciplines including social science, philosophy, literary criticism, and architecture. Defining deconstruction is a difficult task because writers do not agree upon a single definition that summarizes the philosophical move in the stated discipline. In this study, the term "deconstructive" or "deconstruction" is not specifically tied to the philosophy of Deconstruction, despite the obvious similarities in thought and writers. The term is used opposite the way the term "constructive" is being used. A constructive theory builds reality and a destructive theory tears down reality to create a different manipulated or changed end through shared narrative materials. The terms "constructive" and "destructive" are not used to further the cause of either philosophical argument. The terms were chosen for the strength of the root word in each descriptive to explain what happens when materials of narrative are shared between people. The usage of such terms is chosen to help categorize theories. It should not be inferred as a common practice in the genre of postmodern analysis. Instead, this is a purposeful choice of the author to aid in classification of theory.

The term "Simulacra" and its singular "Simulacrum" are the terms that Baudrillard uses for his theory of a sign standing in for the real. Other theorists describe the same theory as "Simulation." For this study, the terms are used interchangeably. Consistency is the governing factor for this project and how these terms are used. Wherever these terms are used it should be concluded by the reader that Baudrillard's theory as stated in *Simulacra and Simulation* is the referent.

"Environment" is a term used to describe the physical landscape created to communicate and elicit feelings from the consumers or participants in these environments. The term "feeling"

is the byproduct of interaction with environments. A person that sees an ice cream truck or hears the magic song played over an enlarged megaphone anchored to the roof of the sluggish automobile interacts with this symbol of their childhood. The truck, the sounds, and other physical elements that symbolize childhood are an interactive environment created to directly or indirectly elicit feelings from the consumers of these symbolic environments.

These definitions will lead into further exploration of specific theories foundational to the study of created and shaped reality. The basic definitions discussed are foundational in understanding the formation and shaping of reality through Semiology, Coordinated Management of Meaning, Symbolic Convergence Theory, and the Narrative Paradigm. The commonality in each of these theories is the foundational constructive value of humans making or creating reality through various means.

## Constructive Theories

Most popular communication theories are theories of construction. These theories explain or reflect how reality is constructed through shared meaning, shared experience, common narratives, exploration of misunderstanding, etc. Commonly applied theories construct. Baudrillard's theory of simulation deconstructs meaning producing a seductive preference for the simulated sign. Meaning eventually reaches a pure simulation when the sign no longer represents the original but is used to deconstruct the meaning of the original and misrepresent all associations with reality. In order to understand the radical difference between the two concepts a brief summarization of common constructive theories will be discussed.

W. Barnett Pearce and Vernon Cronen established the theory of Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) under the assertion that people who take place in co-

constructing their personal and social realities in conversation are simultaneously shaped by the words they create together with others in conversation (Pearce, Coordinated 37-9). Persons-in-conversation is further defined as those using face-to-face communication to create this world that both can establish a new understanding through the coordination of meaning. Pearce says in "The Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM)," "The primary questions in CMM-ish criticism is, 'What are they making together?' That is, what kind of identities, episodes, relationships, and cultures are being constructed by the patterns of communication put together as people interact with each other?" (Coordinated 43). This is a constructing process. representative forms of communication.

A second theory of reality construction through narrative is Ernest G. Bormann's Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT). SCT originated from small group communication theory explaining the interaction of individuals as they combine fantasies to create a larger group or master fantasy. Bormann says, "Shared fantasies provide group members with comprehensible forms for explaining their past and thinking about their future" (Bormann, *Symbolic* 128). Group members create a reality, or form, which will help rationalize what has happened and predict what will. These fantasies are established by shared communication and spreading of information through process. Bormann says, "The central focus of the symbolic convergence perspective is upon the communicative processes by which human beings converge their individual fantasies, dreams, and meanings into shared symbol systems" (*Communication* 189). Bormann discovered that there was a connection between the fantasies group members used when they converse and the master vision that is created. Symbols create a master vision that may be a representation or a simulation. Once a community has shared a plethora of fantasies they co-create an entire integrated and organized system of making sense of their world.

Bormann calls these "master analogies" or "rhetorical visions" (*Communication* 189). Small group interaction using imagery and fantasy constructs shared group reality.

A third constructive theory of representation is Walter Fisher's Narrative Paradigm. "The narrative paradigm proposes that human beings are inherently storytellers who have a natural capacity to recognize the coherence and fidelity of stories they tell and experience," said Fisher in *Human Communication as Narrative* (24). Fisher continues to emphasize the importance of rationality calling it is an essential element of rhetorical competence (115). The narrative paradigm introduces a new conceptual framework that governs reality for humans. It rests on five essential postulates. First, "Humans are… storytellers" (Fisher 5). Secondly, good reason is the governing cognitive frame of human decision-making and communication. Fisher says thirdly, "The production and practice of good reasons are ruled by matters of history, biography, culture, and character" (5). "Rationality is determined by the nature of persons as narrative" is the fourth postulate (Fisher 5). Lastly, Fisher says, "The world as we know it is a set of stories that must be chosen among in order for us to live life in a process of continual re-creation" (5). The first and fifth postulates describe the constructive nature of the narrative paradigm in best detail. Humans must be symbolic creatures for this case to have any validity. If they do use symbols then the outcomes of representation formation of reality are endless as they are *created* in the exchange of narratives.

Pearce and Cronen's CMM, Bormann's SCT, and Fisher's Narrative Paradigm are all popular constructive theories of representation that do not directly address the destructive power of simulated reality. The commonality between all three theories is that humans use representation to make or construct reality. Other theories of constructive power are also used frequently in communication studies. Some constructivist theorists, like Jesse Delia, believe that

people are ingrained with an implicit theory of communication that they use to decipher and shape their social environment without mention of a deconstructed social reality through misrepresentation of signs (Griffin 115). This conclusion is not always true. When a man tells a representative story about his brobdingnagian fish, that story may not be founded in the same reality as the original story. As the story is reproduced it becomes a shared simulation based in no reality instead of a representation of truth. This presents a problem if the constructive assumption of representation is the sole voice in this discussion. No actual experience can ever be perfectly duplicated, as in the case of *Into the Wild*, but through a story many elements can be replayed. These ideas must be addressed as foundational semiotic theories in communication studies; however, these theories lack comparison between using symbols constructively as representations or destructively as simulations. In order to explain it fully a discussion of Baudrillard's destructive theory of simulation must be explored. Although it can be argued that CMM, SCT, and the Narrative Paradigm all discuss possible destructive powers of representation, or the duplication of false reality, none of these theories discuss the depth of simulation like Baudrillard's theory. A look at destructive theory like simulation is necessary to understand what is happening through falsified representations.

## Destructive Theory

Deconstructive communication theories have been a phenomenon developed through postmodern thought. Although other theorists have also had a part in developing a genre of criticism that disassembles polarized meaning, Jacques Derrida is the leading voice in this genre. Derrida's ultimate conclusions note that when two binaries are extended away from each other, a paradox ensues that is not in fact a paradox. Reducing the binary is a modern mindset and

introducing a new order, the third order in many cases, becomes the deconstructive element of analysis. Deconstruction unchecked can spiral out of control producing no meaning. Taken to the extreme, deconstruction along the lines of theorists like Derrida, Michel Foucault, Martin Heidegger, and Baudrillard will produce a box of puzzle pieces without a picture to produce. Deconstruction takes apart meaning and produces a skepticism of constructed or feigned reality.

The bulk of deconstructive scholarship dedicated to Baudrillard falls under three categories each associated with a key term: simulation, seduction, and nostalgia. Simulation is the process of substituting a sign for reality, as the sign becomes illusion and not reality; meaning is distorted. In a world of simulation, seduction represents the distance between the two poles and the desire for the simulated element over the real. Lastly, nostalgia embraces the seductive power of a simulated reality in its layman meaning. The longing for historic relevance without historic backing is the misdirected reality of the simulated nostalgia without real support.

Scholars like Dirk Bunzel apply seduction as an extension of simulated meaning. Through a case study of a five-start Australian seaside hotel he analyzed the simulation of virtual social control over employees as customer service reports created a sense of virtual surveillance and virtual community. These elements became preferred to the elements of coercion (actual surveillance) and consensus (actual community) as the fantasies of individuals at the Grad Seaside Hotel were created (Bunzel 377). Others critics apply seduction in a similar fashion using Baudrillard's theory of simulation to support the polarization of the sign over the real and emphasizing the latter as the important factor in the domination of the sign. For this study the seduction of the sign becomes an unimportant part of the progression of simulation. The question to be answered her deals with the progression of the sign along the four-stage typology of simulation. Therefore, literature dealing with the study of simulation is more applicable to

this study.

Scholars applying nostalgia like Lance J. Noe in his article "9-11 as Nostalgia: Implications for Public Administration Theory and Practice" use nostalgia as an extension of simulated reality. Baudrillard says, "What is lost in the work that is serially reproduced, is it *aura*, its singular quality of the here and now, its aesthetic form… What is lost is the original, which only a history itself nostalgic and retrospective can reconstitute as 'authentic'" (*Simulacra* 99). A history itself cannot reproduce an actual reality if it is not a representative history. The longing for a true history of things, the nostalgic order, is thus supported by a simulated history. The cycle of longing is only supported by the falsity of its existence. Therefore, nostalgia is an extension of simulation and not a separate phenomenon. In Noe's article, he addresses the fact that a "pre-911" or "post-911" world was created to base administration directives or changes on although the terms and history themselves were an extension of created reality. The history of "pre-911" is a nostalgic order for consumers although not completely real.

"Seduction" and "nostalgia" are both extensions of simulated theory. For this study, simulation must be the theoretical backing and methodological tool or illogical jumps would ensue. Therefore, this study situates under the Baudrillardian category of simulation analysis like the eight theorists chosen to create a similar methodology in the following chapter. Now that this study has been introduced, justified, and situated, a more thorough discussion of simulation from Baudrillard's text *Simulacra and Simulation* is needed.

*Simulacra and Simulation*

When a person symbolizes an object and communicates the symbol as true although it is false the process of simulacra begins. Baudrillard says, "Simulation threatens the difference between the 'true' and the 'false,' the 'real' and the 'imaginary'" (3). Every duplication of a

simulated object creates more simulation without the possibility of returning to representation. If a story is built on falsity it cannot regain its truth by continuing to duplicate a false rendition of truth. When a symbol is taken out of its context and broken down into miniaturized cells and parts and things that can be controlled and can be reproduced infinite times from there, the dimension of simulation ignites (Baudrillard 2). A symbol tries to take the characteristics of something and reproduces them to make a clone of the entire object. The problem is that no symbol can ever completely represent the original. In the same way, the visual environment broken down into manageable parts to be described and represented can never completely capture the context and experience of the original. The use of multiple signs and recurring signs creates a space where the real image no longer can exist, according to Baudrillard. This occurrence over time makes the real no longer distinguishable from the simulation (Foss, Foss, and Trapp 307-8). The representation told and retold begins to be all that participants know, a new simulated environment. Once the simulation becomes a new reality the symbol has gone through all four stages of simulation and it becomes more like the original as it spins out into a realized and final simulation.

Baudrillard lays the framework for the four-stage typology of the evolution of signs in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994). These stages happen sequentially but may also be simultaneous. There are no stage jumps in the simulation of a sign because each stage is based on the previous and is foundational for the next. The simulation of a sign is not representation. It is the "radical negation of the sign as reference" and a "death sentence" to the previous layers of meaning (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 6). Representation assumes equivalence between the sign and the real. Simulation is a destruction of previous meaning by a new signified meaning. This is when simulation becomes destructive. The destructive process is put in order when the sign

displays no equivalence to its previous meaning or to the original real.

The first stage in simulation is *symbolic order* where the sign stands in directly for the real and reflects the image. There is no room for misunderstanding in symbolic order. All participants agree on what something means and are clear about its relation to reality. The second stage, or the first stage of simulation evolution, is *counterfeiting*. There is no longer a direct link between the sign and the real. Thirdly, the process of *production* happens when there is no longer a care for the fidelity of the representation as long as it gets the same result. A representation of exaggerated proportion, like a fable, can continue to be produced as long as it gets the same reaction from the receiver. The final stage that completes the simulacra is *simulation*. Simulation is the final divorce between reality and symbol. The symbol distorts the original so that it is no longer recognizable from the original object. It becomes more like the original to the point that it may be indistinguishable. In the present order of simulation, signs finally point to nothing (Foss, Foss, and Trapp 309-11).

Baudrillard states, "When the real is no longer what it was, nostalgia assumes its full meaning" (*Simulacra* 6). Once the full simulation has been completed the image has no relation to any reality whatsoever. This statement indirectly contradicts the ideas behind constructive theories. Overall, Semiotics, CMM, SCT, and the Narrative Paradigm all conclude that reality is constructed through its duplicated parts into a cohesive whole without regard to the possibility of a simulated reality represented as valid. But in contrast, Baudrillard concludes that the sign becomes its own pure simulation once produced over time, yet extended amounts of time are not essential for the simulation exist (*Simulacra* 6). It starts by reflecting a profound reality, moves to masking and denaturing a profound reality, continues to mask the absence of a profound reality, and it finally reaches the stage of simulation. Baudrillard calls these kinds of symbolism

"murderers of the real, murderers of their own model" (*Simulacra* 5). The simulation morphs into something more without regard to the destruction of the real.

He continues his argument throughout the text applying it to various situations and experiences in modern culture. He explained how the Philippine government enshrined the Tasaday Indians as the perfect example of Third World savages never influenced by modern society. However, once the government found and exploited them in the name of science, the idea of typical Indian was entrenched in the mind of the Philippine people. The Tasaday no longer are a people of their own, but a morbid example of cultural selfishness grotesquely using people to serve their discipline (Baudrillard, *Simulation* 9-10). Ultimately, these people have been preserved as a stoic example of human exploitation and obsession with the surreal. No longer considered as the perfect representation of Third World savages they were established as a simulated savage, a perverted exploitation.

In a similar way, science and technology were deployed to fight the natural death and aging process of Ramses II. After years of rotting in the basement of a museum, a panic swept *the West* because the king's body was slowly decomposing and being eaten by worms (Baudrillard *Simulation* 9-10). Baudrillard explains that the problem with American culture is its drive to assimilate non-American history into American past by preserving them in a nostalgic state through science (*Simulation* 10). The fact is that they are not American, but they are captured and recast as new American artifacts. We may not have anything purely American in the museum, but our museums are state-of-the-art and the best in the world. Our culture is obsessed with preserving items and ideals deemed historical for the purpose of easing our minds about our own dysfunctional circumstances. Baudrillard says, "We require a visible past, a visible continuum, a visible myth of origin, which reassures us about our end" (*Simulation* 10).

Ramses II is an example of the simulated real that western culture adopts symbolically as its own preserving it through science and ultimately setting it as a landmark victory. "Everywhere we live in a universe strangely similar to the original – things are doubled by their own scenario" (Baudrillard *Simulation* 11). Baudrillard concludes that culture should allow reality to die when it belongs dead. This cultural obsession with preserving the past in a visual form creates a simulated past inseparable from true reality.

The final simulation discussed in this section is Baudrillard's most famous example. Baudrillard says, "Disneyland is a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulacra" (*Simulation* 12). He argues that the utopian society Disneyland represents is not attached to reality but to a feigned reality of childhood. Adults abandon reality and revert to childhood behaviors and thinking once they have passed the gates. Does it make sense to stand in line to participate in this feigned experiential utopian life complete with mythical creatures and an excessive number of gadgets necessary to create the multitudinous effect? Baudrillard points to the irony of this frozen, childlike world having been created by a man now cryogenized (*Simulation* 12). Disneyland exists to allow our culture to hide "real" America. Disneyland is presented as imaginary causing culture to assume that the things around it are reality. This has ceased to be the case in our hyper-entertainment society. Baudrillard touches on the absurdity of Disney in *Cool Memories II* saying, "At Disneyworld in Florida they are building a giant mock-up of Hollywood, with the boulevards, studies, etc. One more spiral in the simulacrum. One day they will rebuild Disneyland at Disneyworld" (42). Disney is recreating simulations continually in America. Smith says in *Reading Simulacra*, "Disney wants to build its newest theme park, 'Colonial Disney,' on top of *real* Civil War battlegrounds in Virginia. This truly is the site where reality is effaced by simulation. At Disney, as in America in general, reality is always

inferior to imitation" (114). Once started, the simulation of Disney will never end. It has no ability to return to something. The something is nothing.

The increasing popularity of organic foods and inclusive health clubs is another example of simulation. It points to the fact that we've lost touch with the "real" world. Baudrillard explains this future-present phenomenon:

> People no longer look at each other, but there are institutes for that. They no longer touch each other, but there is contactotherapy. They no longer walk, but the go jogging, etc. Everywhere one recycles lost faculties, or lost bodies, or lost sociality or the lost taste for food. One reinvents penury, asceticism, vanished savage naturalness: natural food, health food, yoga (*Simulation* 13).

This "luxurious materialization of life" shows that our world has ceased to be real. We recreate and materialize those things that have been lost that touch our souls and move our being. Instead of demolishing buildings and allowing creation to retake what it lost, ironically environments are created indoors that represent a reality somewhere out there long lost through the frozen childhood of Disneyland.

However, it needs to be explained that there are moments were truths are violated or misrepresented for important functions. Humor comes from the violation of expectation and may be created through exaggeration or telling of reality with intentional changes to structural, material, or characterological coherence and fidelity. Humor is a beneficial example of intentional violation. Another example that immediately surfaces is the aged debate of righteous deceit. Rahab deceived the king of Jericho and Corrie Ten Boom deceived the Nazi regime. There are moments where righteous deceit may be a profitable example of simulation, however this is not a direct concern for this study. In the symbols at hand, those who use vintage

elements in churches are communicating a story. Unfortunately, as representations are told and communicated and extended they also fall prey to the attacks of simulation divorcing a currently vintage congregation with the doxology and praxiology of past churches. This schism, between representation and simulation, is the difference between constructive and destructive elements of symbolism.

Emerging Church/Vintage Worship Environments

It is no secret to participants at any church gathering that the environments where people worship, celebrate, or mourn communicates loudly. Worship gatherings are symbolically rich and important for rhetorical study. Is it merely for practical amplification that the speaker stands at the front of the gathering room, often called a sanctuary, slightly elevated above the congregation? Or consider the entrance to most church buildings, do the doorway and foyer look more like a home with a place to hang your coat and a comfortable sitting area or a business with clear double glass doors and a welcome table where you can begin "shopping" the programs much like a YMCA? All of these symbols communicate something. These choices are intentional and unintentional rhetorical decisions meant to assist the participants in worship, celebration, and mourning.

Church architecture expert Jeanne Halgren Kilde, while discussing the swelling numbers of people in congregations at the end of the 19th Century, noted that church buildings soon began to mimic those of secular society. "In developing means of satisfying these new worship room requirements, architects turned to the theatre and concert hall projects with which they were also engaged" (Kilde 116). The need necessitated a change. The change met the need, and new worship environments were created. Kilde continued, "Architects generally found little need to

distinguish between requirements for secular and religious auditoriums, and as a result, technologies for secular and religious auditoriums overlapped considerably" (116). This is a common trend throughout history. As the secular society changes to meet the needs of the people, so the church must change because they are trying to reach the same individuals with the same preferences in the same cultures. Changes in historically secular environments are a prophetic analysis of the changes in current worship environments.

Dan Kimball, Emerging Church scholar, pastor, and author of *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* and *Emerging Worship: Creating Worship Gatherings for New Generations*, writes that he recognized the need for change in worship environments at the end of the 21st century. He saw that music culture was changing from high-octane performance to stripped-down acoustic sessions. "I was pretty much as a loss as to what to do. Then late one night I happened upon the band The Cranberries playing an *Unplugged* concert on MTV. It was an all-acoustic performance. The stage was draped with a dark, rich fabric and lit by candelabras. It looked more like a grandmother's attic than a rock-concert venue, and I was struck by the simplicity of it" (Kimball, *Church* 34). The need for simplicity drove MTV, analysts of culture, to react to the desire of their audience and produce a different kind of environment that communicated something unique. "No fancy light shows or drum-set risers. I also noticed how close the audience was seated to the musicians. There wasn't a giant separation between the two groups. Rather, they were sort of all together in a 'community.' I immediately felt that there was something very interesting to this 'unplugged' approach" (Kimball, *Church* 34). As culture necessitates a need, organizations and businesses must react or risk lost clientele. The needs of a generation cause changes that perpetuate new needs for the next generation. Kimball focuses on the difference between a modern society that produced

seeker-sensitive churches and a postmodern society that no longer valued seeker-sensitive environments. This study is an attempt to analyze a current trend in the progression of church worship environments and how they are radically changing or becoming stagnant in a postmodern matrix.

An overview of basic church architecture and its symbolic value are needed to help draw a connection between Baudrillard's analyses of the evaluation of representative signs into false realities, simulation. One critic, Richard Kieckhefer, says in *Theology in Stone*:

> To be sure, churches also contain elements of traditional and commercial culture. But to the extent that buildings, furnishings, and decorations are grounded in an evolving heritage that refers back to earlier sources and honors and critiques them, giving constant commentary on them, they are expressions of a developmental culture. And it is by keeping symbols alive in this way that churches become vested with symbolic resonance (165).

Current church buildings and gathering areas are still speaking by duplicating what has been done in the past. They are a light communicating into the future and an illumination from the past. Modern architecture is a representation of continually evolving culture. New symbols take on greater meaning and older symbols are redefined.

Kieckhefer structures his text arguing for three broad traditions of church design, although it could be argued that other forms and hybrids of these forms are present. The three main traditions are the classic sacramental church, the classic evangelical church, and the modern communal church (Kieckhefer 11-2). The example environments explained by Kimball are all a type of modern communal churches. Kieckhefer defines this design style as one in which space is primary for mingling and sharing in community and where the assembly itself

may become the focal point of the worshiping community (12). Such churches focus on the importance of community and how the congregation interacts. Experiential environments and interaction between participants is also a primary concern for Emerging Church worship gatherings.

His text looks at four different ways of studying churches. He concludes, "One might easily devise thirteen ways of looking at a church, but this book will suggest four, corresponding to these four fundamental questions: the spatial dynamics of a church, its centering focus, its aesthetic impact, and its symbolic resonance" (Kieckhefer 10). Modern communal churches value these four different types of symbolic environment differently then the other two categories that Kieckhefer analyzes. He concludes that modern communal churches use space to allow people to pass from different positions in the world into a common environment where preliminary social gatherings can occur before entering into an assembly focused within a unified space (60). These churches use space as a means of symbolic representation or simulation.

Churches also take on an element of communication when a physical body becomes the focus of the congregation. Different members may have a different focus and it may or may not correspond with the focus of the liturgy (Kieckhefer 96). It is no surprise that the aesthetic impact of a church building represents the way the church views God. There are correlated environmental experiences. Much of the aesthetic impact of the building depends on how the church is used (Kieckhefer 133). Lastly, every church is filled with symbolic associations but may not display them with such obvious tones. Kieckhefer says, "... a visitor to a church might sense something of its symbolic function as a place charged with meanings. Yet more important, even a member of the church might retain that sense of being surrounded by symbols always

awaiting fuller articulation, deeper comprehension" (*Church* 164). Every building creates environments that elicit feelings from the congregation or assembly. The goal of a competent communicator is to allow the environments to speak what is intended. However, this is nearly impossible because different symbols represent different reality to different people, and simulated reality deceives alludes to that which does not exist. Symbols become vested in symbolic relevance when they are connected with other symbols over time. Kieckhefer's analysis of modern communal churches aligns well with Kimball's suggestion of vintage church environments created to meet the needs of postmodern people.

Many environments in the Emerging Church are vintage environments reaching back into a time past to meet the desires of present people. It makes new elements seductive in their use as a new simulated reality not based in a past reality. Kimball says that the general cry of postmodern people is to connect back to a spiritual place of vintage worship and vintage faith and vintage symbolism (*Church* 34-5). Those in the changing "Emergent" culture that are part of a new wave of change made Kimball realize that old ways of outreach were not working. Instead, new symbolism had to be used to reach an evolving, hyper-visual culture. "Little by little, I began to recognize that non-Christian students, who had once been impressed by all of our programming, dramas, media clips, and topical messages, were showing less and less interest. With technology now so accessible to teenagers that they could easily create their own flashy video clips, seeing it in church was no big deal," said Kimball (*Church* 32-3). Duplicating the same scenario that had been successful in the past would have created a gap between the students and the leadership.

Many leaders slowly understand the usefulness of culture in the church without giving into the worship of culture. Kimball has coined the term "vintage" as a distinctive for the

churches he pastors. According to Kimball, vintage symbolism in Emerging Churches impacts a new generation of people that have grown accustomed to modern church environments. Sally Morgenthaler is quoted in *The Emerging Church* summarizing the shift in this time period:

> While Dan was making this transition and starting Graceland with a new philosophy and approach, so were a number of other ministries… Instead of needing to be convinced that God existed or that God was cool, unchurched people now assumed God existed and God was already cool. The questions for the church after this shift: 'Can the church escape the happy-song-silk-plant ghetto and minister to a cheese-intolerant, spiritually self-sufficient culture?' (34)

This is the foundational shift of Kimball's brand of the emerging church. The churches that are a part of the Emerging Church movement, where the environments in question will be analyzed, are trying to answer Morgenthaler's question in very different ways. In order to contextualize this study it must be stated that Kimball is not the other emerging church scholar trying to meet the needs of postmodern people with postmodern values. Other churches look much different than Kimball's church and other's beliefs are also much different. Defining the emerging church is one of the more difficult tasks of writing emerging church commentary.

## Defining Emerging Churches

Emerging Church scholars Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger have produced the most comprehensive resources on the Emerging Church to date. Gibbs and Bolger quote Brian McLaren, who media types and critics advocate as the leading theologian and mouthpiece of the movement, as saying, "[Emerging Churches] provides not only the best available overview of the emerging church phenomenon but also an example of charitable and reflective – rather than

suspicious and reactive – scholarly analysis" (back cover). The text defines three practices that all Emerging Churches have in common and six more practices that may happen as a result of adopting the three definite practices. Gibbs and Bolger found their material by collecting the stories of hundreds of Emerging Church leaders across the United States and the United Kingdom. The book also includes personal accounts of individual leaders as an appendix to the analysis of the nice common Emerging Church practices. Kimball is one of those researched and often quoted voices in the Emerging Church conversation.

Gibbs and Bolger say, "The church is a modern institution in a postmodern world" (17). In a modern society, the church had been the dominant force in society. News was exchanged, culture was governed, and the rules of the land mirrored the laws of the church for hundreds of years. Gibbs and Bolger said that from AD 313 when Roman emperor Constantine declared Christianity as the official religion until the 1950s the church occupied a central position in society (17). Two major cultural shifts have happened in that have affected the whole of society. "The first is the transition from Christendom to post-Christendom, with the latter exemplified by pluralism and a radical relativism," said Gibbs and Bolger (17). The church lost its privileged position in society and increasingly faded to the margins of society with other non-profit and recreational organizations. The church of position became the church of margin resulting in lost membership and decreased participation. Society also changed in a much different way. "The second is the transition from modernity to postmodernity. This shift represents a challenge to the main assertions of modernity, with its pursuit of order, the loss of tradition, and the separation of the different spheres of reality, expressed, for example, in the separation of the sacred and the profane at every level," said Gibbs and Bolger (18). As the church began to lose its privileged place in society, it began to stake grounds and draw barriers between it and "the world."

Modernity brought polarization and order, defined borders and structure instead of fluidity and integration.

Society is also shifting in many other ways. The world is becoming increasingly global moving from westernization to globalization. There is a shift in communication dominance as a communication revolution made electronic mediums the dominant order instead of print culture. Consumer, international, and informational based economies are increasingly popular. There are significant genetic and biological breakthroughs with the human body. And lastly, there is a convergence of religion and science that has not been seen in centuries (Gibbs and Bolger 18). As a result, many Emerging Churches are considering how church is practiced and the theological implications of a church that is seemingly irrelevant to postmodern culture. It is no longer an option to call postmodernity a passing phase as more generations are growing up with a postmodern framework. Gibbs and Bolger suggest, "The church must 'de-absolutize' many of its sacred cows in order to communicate afresh the good news to a new world" (19). Kimball's argument suggests the same thing. To Kimball, a reworking of the modern church into a postmodern mindset results in vintage worship gatherings.

Most Emerging Church pastors and theologians claim that praxiology in their church stem from a theological restructuring. This is not always the case as others just see candles and forms reproduced that get results. The difficulty in classifying legitimate Emerging Churches and copycats becomes increasingly difficult as more people recognize the affects of vintage elements in worship gatherings. Gibbs and Bolger say, "[N]ew forms of churches have restored an atmosphere of mystery and awe enhanced by the use of incense, candles, and prayer rituals. Local church leaders must seek to communicate the Christian message using ritual and the five senses to lead effectively in the twenty-first century" (22). These representative elements all

communicate something, but copycatting without theological base may potentially turn into simulation communicating nothing. Ultimately, Emerging Churches are training people to be missionaries to a culture that previously accepted the church but has since become open spiritually and more relativistic.

Postmodern Christians, or those that see themselves as missionally focused on postmoderns, seek to be faithful with the teachings of Jesus in their current time and place (Gibbs and Bolger 28). What the Emerging Church is really seeking to is translate the gospel into the postmodern vernacular:

> Emerging churches remove modern practices of Christianity, not the faith itself. Western Christianity has wed itself to a culture, the modern culture, which is now in decline. Many of us do not know what a postmodern or post-Christendom expression of faith looks like. Perhaps nobody does. But we need to give these leaders space to have this conversation, for this dismantling needs to occur if we are to see the gospel translated for and embodied in twenty-first-century Western culture. (Gibbs and Bolger)

Emerging Churches are those that are moving to the front lines of mission with postmoderns. Systematizing, rationalizing, categorizing, and organizing characterized modernity, but belonging, accepting, and crossover movements now characterize postmodernity. Because of these changes in culture, the church had to change. Kimball argues that the changes needed must be those that are conversant with a vintage faith.

Gibbs and Bolger finally define the Emerging Church saying, “Emerging churches are communities that practice the way of Jesus within postmodern cultures” (44). In every church that Gibbs and Bolger interviewed they were able to establish three distinctives that all Emerging

Churches had in common. They are (1) identifying with the life of Jesus, (2) transforming secular space, and (3) living as community (43-4). The six other distinctives that Emerging Churches may have as a result of adopting these core values are (4) welcoming the stranger, (5) serving with generosity, (6) participating as producers, (7) creating as created beings, (8) leading as a body, and (9) taking part in spiritual activities (Gibbs and Bolger 45). These frameworks gives enough information to classify whether or not a church can be defined as Emergent or if they just have emerging tendencies with vintage faith practices without the theological backing that would lead to a simulated postmodern reality based on a modern mindset. As the two practices get closer together there ceases to be a distinction between the two. This fundamental research helps to position Kimball's ideas of vintage church worship gatherings along with other postmodern Emerging Churches as long as they practice the same core characteristics that Gibbs and Bolger define.

Kimball's text in how to reach a new postmodern, some call it a post-Christian, generation comes with practical ways that others have applied these ideas. In one chart he contrasts the elements of worship between the Modern mindset and the Emerging Church mindset. Kimball does not underestimate the importance of church environments, "We want the aesthetics to scream out who we are and what we are about the moment people walk in the doors" (*Church* 135). Some of the important elements that teach visitors these things are candles, spacing, crosses, and stained glass windows. Kimball says that the Modern church took out the stained glass and replaced it with video screens because they did not want to offend visitors. The Emerging Church has brought stained glass back into the church *on video screens* (*Church* 105). There are few examples about the far-reaching possibilities of what Baudrillard would say about the changing environments in the Emerging Church like this one. This is a

powerful argument with obvious application between the theory of simulation and the changing aesthetic environments of the Emerging Church that Kimball proposes.

As America changes, environments in the church change. In the late 1800s, Kilde showed that the church and secular architecture grew together and could not be separated because similar structures were housing the swelling in population. Kimball suggested in his manual that churches that want to reach a current postmodern culture react in a similar way that he did using postmodern MTV culture in the church. It can be concluded in America through generations of changing church environments that secular and church environments react to current cultural trends in a parallel and similar way. This logical connection leads to some interesting conclusions regarding American simulation.

## The American Way

Baudrillard states that America is the great simulacra of the age. "The Americans, for their part, have no sense of simulation. They are themselves simulation in its most developed state, but they have no language in which to describe it, since they themselves are the model" (*America* 28-9). He speaks out against American culture that has simulated an entire society:

> America ducks the question of origins; it cultivates no origin or mythical authenticity; it has no past and no founding truth. Having known no primitive accumulation of time, it lives in a perpetual present. Having seen no slow, centuries-long accumulation of a principle of truth, it lives in perpetual simulation, in a perpetual present of signs. It has no ancestral territory. The Indians' territory is today marked off in reservations, the equivalent of the galleries in which America stocks its Rembrandts and Renoirs. But this is of no

> importance – America has no identity problem. In the future, power will belong to those peoples with no origins and no authenticity who know how to exploit that situation to the full. (76)

Baudrillard surmises that America has borrowed and stolen the cultures of Europe. It has created its own perpetual simulation with no real evolution of true American reality.

If we are to accept this point then we must understand that all things rooted in American culture are actually rooted in this culture of perpetually simulated signs. Mike Gane says, "America, [Baudrillard] argues, seems to have missed the whole experience of the second order of simulation, to have passed directly from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Its culture was already hyperreal, and Baudrillard always insists it is a contradiction of an achieved utopia… The positive banality of American culture, however, is always mythic, permanently dreamlike in character" (17). Secular and church architecture are firmly grounded in this mythic, dreamlike, and simulated American culture. Simulation in our churches is unavoidable and inevitable according to Baudrillard. As we practice the art of communicating with simulation, Baudrillard has many words of caution to share. Extending the voice of Baudrillard's simulacra into American Emerging Church/Vintage Worship environments with regard to the endless presentation of simulated signs is vitally important.

## Literature Synthesis

Kieckhefer explains that modern communal churches are rich symbolic environments that are necessary to understand beyond a traditional representative understanding of semiotics. Within the emerging church genre of modern communal churches are churches that follow Kimball's teaching of vintage worship elements incorporated in worship gatherings. Kilde

showed how church architecture, created by intentional symbolic decisions, has changed along with the changes in culture. As cultural architecture has met the needs of individuals, the church has continued to change as well. In a modern mindset fraught with classification, order, and scientific reason, this resulted in a church that divided spiritual space and secular space. Kimball pointed out that a similar argument, reaching postmoderns with postmodern space, led him to developing vintage worship environments that met the needs of postmodern people. Emerging churches are simply churches trying to practice the teachings of Jesus within the postmodern context according to Gibbs and Bolger. Many vintage churches use symbolism to represent reality, but there is a constant danger of simulating a falsified reality instead of the actual. This is why the questions asked using CMM, SCT, and the Narrative Paradigm will not adequately answer the problem of simulation in vintage church worship gatherings. CMM, SCT, and the Narrative Paradigm deal largely with representative elements of sign, but Baudrillard's theory stated in *Simulacra and Simulation* establishes a new framework to understand the negation of sign, simulation. A postmodern argument is needed to conduct a postmodern critique of a postmodern church. This is the basic literary argument of this project. Applying Baudrillard's concept of simulation to Kimball's teaching of vintage faith worship gatherings will provide valuable insight to the uses and the cautions of future gatherings. If American culture is as simulated as Baudrillard boldly claims, Emerging Churches should be filled with simulated reality.

With this literary background a structure of argument must be produced before further analysis can take place. Other theorists from multiple fields have used Baudrillard's theory of simulation to analyze the destruction of meaning through falsified signs broadcast as real. Synthesizing their studies, methodology, and conclusions will serve as the framework for

analyzing vintage faith worship gatherings.

Examples of Baudrillardian Analysis

Eugene Thacker – *The Science Fiction of Technoscience: The Politics of Simulation and a Challenge for New Media Art*

The purpose of Thacker's article is to discuss new advancements in Technoscience using the relationships between biotechnology, biomedicine, and science fiction. Thacker states that science fiction constructs essentially build a futuristic medical domain filled with simulation resulting in self-fulfilling narratives and the construction of the future instead of its prediction. He then suggests that "net.art" and "new media" are domains to start with Baudrillardian analysis.

This article has a basic structure that is seen in other types of Baudrillardian analysis. Thacker introduces the phenomenon to the reader along with a basic background into Baudrillard's work. Baudrillard published significant material in *Simulacra and Simulation* on science fiction, and Thacker uses this information as the argument's foundational support. Secondly, Thacker gives a history of science fiction's development and disappearance while diffusing Baudrillard's work into the argument as support and basic claim. Lastly, Thacker analyzes the phenomenon by bringing together the ideas of science fiction and the Technosciences. He begins the discussion of an item by drawing references to Baudrillard's four-stage typology of signs. As example, Thacker says, "As third-order simulacra, science fiction is not necessarily different form the technologies and the sciences it narrativizes, and in fact it creates the conditions for their possibility" (157). There is a point where he draws an ultimate reference between the phenomenon and concept by naming the phenomenon for what it

is then discussing its dimensions and consequences. Thacker concludes that science fiction and biotech sciences have created a simulated future that could produce great change in the human-machine relationship.

Greg Hainge – *No(i)stalgia: On the Impossibility of Recognizing Noise in the Present*

This articles primary concern is with nostalgic hyper-reality, but it also discusses dimensions of simulated reality. Hainge starts with an example, leads to the discussion of theory, and then introduces concepts discussing the dimensions between reality and sign. Drawing on a comparison between the archaic art of handwriting and the supposedly more modern forms of producing print, Hainge introduces Baudrillard's concept of nostalgia. Nostalgia is a Baudrillardian concept under the greater idea of simulation. He argues that nostalgia of this kind seems to bypass the perceived virtuality of the postmodern condition in a type of hyper-simulacrum that relies on the misinterpretation of noise (1). Hainge concludes with the claim that this culture does not want to recognize the world from a real perspective. Instead, it is important to acknowledge the fact that we are ultimately incapable of recognizing many cultural products' noise leading to the impossibility of knowing the signs (1).

While developing this argument, Hainge introduces many cultural artifacts that support his claim of noise as nostalgic simulation. Hainge interweaves Baudrillard's thoughts introducing them as motifs while explaining different phenomenon. By doing this, Hainge is able to discuss many topics while putting them in a crucible of simulated reality. He strays from addressing the orders of simulation because his main focus is nostalgia and how it interacts for present semiotic form. Hainge concludes that a misinterpretation of the noise created by the very act of expression produces a nostalgic type of hyper-simulation that relies on this misinterpretation.

Randy Schroeder – *Playspace Invaders: Huizinga, Baudrillard and Video Game Violence*

The purpose of this piece is to explain the escalading phenomenon of video game violence seeping into reality. Schroeder explains the difference in video game violence statistics from past play to recent play. His analysis is heavy in narrative and statistics until the introduction of theory. Schroeder immediately addresses the difficulty with using Baudrillard's theory as an analytic tool because it perpetuates an inexorable feedback-loop (145). This same concept has already been addressed in my study. Schroeder's resolve includes a conclusion on the theorization of video games as an ethical issue. Ultimately, acquired violence becomes the proof that playspace oozes from the screen into reality without the possibility of ever shutting off the idea virtual play. The real problem is not just the actual leakage of the playspace but the electronically induced amnesia to the difference between playspace and reality (Schroeder 150).

Schroeder begins the analysis section of his research discussing the problems of violence with sporadic acknowledgements of simulation theory. In the next section, he outlines Johan Huizinga's idea of "play space" and Baudrillard's idea of simulation. After developing a finalized theory of simulation, he admits that playspace has changed because video game reality has become the real after the game is shut off. Afterwards, he extends the argument back into the general phenomenon of increased video game violence. Schroeder ultimately introduces the phenomenon, develops the new concept, and then analyzes the theory using discussion of the theory without mention of the four-stage simulation process. This analysis is a narrative that explains the phenomenon with general principles introduced by Huizinga and Baudrillard.

Charles Bergman – *Inventing a Beast with No Body: Radio-telemetry, the Marginalization of Animals, and the Simulation of Ecology*

Bergman begins this article on a journey under a great tree in the Caribbean lowlands

between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Bergman is heavily involved in catching and tagging a great green macaw. The phenomenon of radio-telemetry becomes the focus of this study and how the process illustrates Michel Foucault's concepts of "biopower" and Baudrillard's idea of "simulation." Bergman says, "[A]s the new technology creates a greater sense of distance between the "sign" of a creature and its actual reality, wild animals seem to become what Jean Baudrillard terms "simulation", in which they are increasingly signs of their own disappearance – both as creatures and as species" (255). Bergman spends a lot of time introducing the concept of radio-telemetry, it's history, and his part in observing and categorizing the great green macaw.

The story of the great capture of "7.6" takes up the majority of this article, but throughout it Bergman gives hints at possible simulation. Simply calling the bird "7.6" robs it of an identity. It becomes signified as a blinking dot flying somewhere above them in the upper regions of the rain forest. The tracker no longer needs to even see the bird to know what its doing. This is the achievement of simulation as the sign has completely replaced the real. The conclusion is that the endangered bird is never needed to be seen or described in order to save its existence. Instead, "7.6" operates as a simulated reality. The bird ceases to have meaning when it is categorized by radio-telemetry. Next, Bergman introduces Foucault and "biopower" as a useable control system of a falsified relinquence of control. Lastly, Bergman strategically analyzes the disappearance and simulation of animals going back to the aforementioned texts and picking out how Baudrillard's analysis explains the phenomenon of distance between the real and the newly created radio-telemetry sign.

Ernest A. Hakanen – *Lists as Social Grid: Ratings and Rankings in Everyday Life*

Hakanen writes this article as a social analysis commenting on the inundation of lists in our culture like David Letterman's Top Ten Lists. He argues that these lists are a simulation of

actual things and not reality themselves. The basic structure of this article is like that other scholars mentioned already. Hakanen starts by introducing the phenomenon of lists and their proliferation in American culture. Then he builds the basic argument of social grids from Levi-Strauss, Foucault, Baudrillard, and Hacking. Taking lists as social grid patterns, Hakanen builds a new concept where he can introduce Baudrillard's scholarship to the conversation. After addressing the basic point of simulation, Hakanen does something different than other scholars. He analyzes the proliferation of lists according to the three stages of simulation: counterfeiting, production, and simulation. By doing this, Hakanen gives a controlled argument that is more structured than other arguments. Each subheading represents another step in the simulation of lists as social grid.

Hakanen concludes that social grids actually take on the nature of summarizing the trends of society. However, they are not only commentaries but also promotions of a desired society. Lists create new meaning by describing

Michael P. Marks and Zachary M. Fischer – *The King's New Bodies: Simulating Consent in the Age of Celebrity*

In a fascinating article about celebreality and how celebrity has influenced the face of politics in America, Marks and Fischer draw on the theories of simulation from Foucault and Baudrillard. They claim, "Alongside grassroots participation, and in some cases leading it, society is incorporating a new language that deploys celebrities as chief vehicles for the simulation of political consent, thereby overcoming public apathy, and buttressing the existing political order" (371). Using simulation theories, the authors explain and extend this thought in a complete logic.

Marks and Fischer begin by introducing the phenomenon with a simple case study of

Jesse Ventura winning the Governor's seat in Minnesota. They prove the phenomenon establishing a basic understanding for readership of the background of celebrity voice in politics. They establish the roots historically with the Medieval King as celebrity, the real. Next, the authors deploy the key issue to understand in this argument – the King's body. Then Marks and Fischer establish the celebrity as the new body of the King, a falsified real. It isn't until two-thirds of the way through the article that Baudrillard's theory of simulation is introduced. Simulation vocabulary is used, but direct words of Baudrillard are saved until further into the article. The new logic of celebrity as the King's body has been well established once Baudrillard is introduced. Lastly, Marks and Fischer discuss the possibility for a "star-crazed future" and the extension of the celebrity as a falsified real ultimately concluding that Baudrillard's theory establishing disconnect between public perception and the progression of the new king's image in celebrity politics.

Jonathan Stuart Boulter – *Partial Glimpses of the Infinite: Borges and the Simulacrum*

Boulter has some very interesting insights into Baudrillard's use of simulation in the text *Simulacra and Simulation*. He is the first scholar mentioned to suggest Baudrillard's satirical quotation from the book of Ecclesiastes. This theme leads to an introduction of Baudrillard and a discussion of the four stages of simulation. That is where the structured parts of his argument end. The rest of the article is an analysis of Jorge Luis Borges' *El Aleph*. Boulter points out the simulated language and concepts throughout the text taken from Spanish to English. It is more an argument of Borges' postmodernity mixed with simulated analysis. Boulter also avoids keeping strictly to the four stages of simulation even though they were systematically addressed at the beginning of the article. A better methodology than Boulter's should be implied.

Steven Carter – *Real Simulacra Redux: Barbie and Jane Versus the Wooden Nutmegs of Connecticut*

The final article taken into account is written primarily about change and simulated change. Carter's article, with good intention, seeks to extend Baudrillard's theories of postmodern simulacra into fresh territories (42). In order to accomplish this mission, Carter must extend previous narritivizations into new realms.

The structure of this article goes along with other theorists already mentioned. Carter introduces the phenomenon of "vehicle-thinking" and "ur-reality," which are essentially new terms for simulation, through example. The first suggested is the change of Ronald Reagan in the public's eye. While discussing examples of how this phenomenon changed America, Carter gives an argument for vehicle-thinking calling it the second stage of simulation progress – counterfeiting. Counterfeiting is discussed with examples and extensions into American culture through vehicle-thinking. Carter continues to discuss the phenomenon of simulation in American culture through the next two stages. Lastly, Carter introduces the main subjects of his article after explaining the overall counterfeiting, production, and simulation of a public American culture.

Carter shows how Jane Fonda's career had gone through a number of metamorphoses and how Barbie is also change with not set "self." Both Fonda and Barbie are treated in the public sphere as commodities and according to Carter it does not matter which one is the human being and which is the plastic doll, the simulated order is intact. One is the real and one is the falsified, but as in the story of the nutmegs, either can be substituted without concern or discern from the consumer. They each fascinate the public because of their ur-realistic careers – vehicle-thinking. He ends with the irony of simulated light forever changed. Night will never be dark as long as

Disneyland exists. We've transformed the night and made it light. Carter establishes the phenomenon, introduces the new concept, and ends by producing multiple examples of the phenomenon along the methodology of simulation's four-stage process.

Noting the differences between constructive and deconstructive criticism, Baudrillard's theory of simulation, and how others have applied Baudrillard's theory is a variety of different disciplines leads into the synthesis of literature into a workable methodology for studying vintage faith worship gathering symbolism.

# Chapter 3 – Methodology Construction

The nature of this study calls for a methodology that can be applied systematically to multiple elements in the vintage faith worship gathering. This type of analysis has not been previously popular with other Baudrillardian scholars and is compiled with some hesitation. However, by looking at Baudrillard's literature and analyzing other critics a logical order of application appears. In this section, eight critics were chosen from a vast collection of scholars who have applied Baudrillard in many different fields. Doing an exhaustive analysis of all simulation application is impossible because of the pervasive nature of this theory. The eight articles all represent different fields of study with common rhythms of application.

Following the examples of previous Baudrillardian critics, I will analyze simulated vintage church environments in a montage of the four-stage sequence already outlined in this study. These eight Baudrillardian critics were chosen to synthesize into a working example of a methodological analysis. Considering the structure of each argument, the depth of the argument, and the vast topics the arguments cover, these critical articles will serve as a frame of reference for the application of Baudrillard's simulation sequence. Because of the elusive and often hands-off approach critics take to simulation, there is no singular way of studying simulated signs. These articles serve as justification of my analytical method. Their examples will now serve as a Baudrillardian framework to develop my own methodology.

## Methodologies Synthesized and Method Realized

All Baudrillardian scholars discussed to this point frame their arguments by introducing the phenomenon they are studying before addressing the theory of simulation. After they

introduce it, a brief explaining the background and extension of simulation into their field was given. Scholars Marks and Fischer introduce the phenomenon of celebrity bodies then introduce Baudrillard's take on simulation as it applies. Hakanen also using a similar framework to discuss lists. After introducing the spread of lists in America, he gives the simulation literature that supports his argument. The developed methodology will mirror what these scholars have done. Lastly, it is important to name the different dimensions of simulation progression like Thacker and Hakanen do in their articles. This third step in the methodology gives this study a unique dimension of naming the phases although other scholars warn critics about the difficulty of doing it. Also, following these scholars by introducing the theory of simulation into new fields will give way for more questions and extensions in later studies.

Drawing on these eight articles, the methodology for the following analysis chapter will follow this process:

1. Introduce the vintage faith worship gathering element.
2. Integrate simulation theory into the use of the element.
3. Names the phases of simulation when possible.

With all postmodernity, the denial of terms and reestablishment of reality leaves room for critical error while trying to name and classify phenomenon. However, there is a rhythm of order in each of these articles that serves as an undeniable foundation for using Baudrillard as a methodological tool. Baudrillard's steps may happen simultaneously as Hakanen noted as a common characteristic in postmodernity (248). This will present some difficulty in analyzing certain steps of symbolic order because of the elusive nature and the non-methodological examples Baudrillard employs. However, applying simulation in this way does not detract from the foundational teachings of the theory. This methodology will allow the critique to produce the

most comprehensive analysis between vintage church environments and simulation.

Application

This analysis will be supported by visual examples from America's leading Emerging Churches implementing vintage worship elements as suggested from TheOoze.org, a leading Emerging community, and the connections page of the Church of the Apostles where Karen M. Ward, a leading Emergent Fellow, serves as abbess/vicar. These two websites are credible resources that set the trends for other Emerging venues across the nation. They have included the following gatherings as a list of relevant vintage-style Emerging Churches: Matthew's House in Oceanside, CA, Vineyard Central in Norwood, OH, Highway Community in Mountain View, CA, The Bridge in Pontiac, MI, Mosaic 5619 in Austin, Red in Chattanooga, Solomon's Porch in Minneapolis, and Church of the Apostles in Seattle. These churches incorporate vintage worship elements visually into their services including building, stage, music, seating, technology, aesthetic environments, and more. This project will draw heavily from symbolic imagery from the stated Emerging Churches to show the progression of simulated environments in the vintage churches.

This study will be the first of its kind to illuminate the connection between vintage worship environments and Baudrillard's theory of simulation. Baudrillard's simulation narrative should show the danger of mutated signs as a falsified representation of a feigned real. There is something interesting about a church that adds mood lighting to the stage or provides couches to sit on while watching the sermon via video screen as it happens live in another room of the church building. Baudrillard discussed this irony of newly created vintage elements talking about a house that had succumb to a fire in his journalistic memoirs *Cool Memories* when he

said, “They had taken out such a good insurance policy that when their house in the country burnt down, they were able to build another one older than the first” (199). The irony of such vintage environments on the cutting edge of an evolving movement symbolizing feigned reality is a feasting ground for studying simulacra. On the foundation of this literature and with this methodology, the following chapter will analyze eight elements of vintage worship.

# Chapter 4 – The Destruction of Representation in Vintage Faith

## An Unapologetic Introduction to the Text

The rhetorical artifact in question for this analysis was Dan Kimball's ideology of how to reach the postmodern generation through worship environments named vintage faith worship gatherings. The ideology came from two predominate texts, but was better described as a mosaic text with many interwoven layers of questions, writings, photographs, and examples that were a part of the text without being contained within the binding and Zondervan copyright agreement of Kimball's 504 pages of print.[6] For the purposes and functionality of this study, Kimball's book, *The Emerging Church*, was analyzed and found to contain eight different symbolic suggestions of how to reach the postmodern generation with semiotic changes. Ultimately, Kimball suggested that vintage faith worship gatherings should consider the use of symbols like *a band*, *technology*, *video screen broadcasts*, *life-stage groups*, *ancient structures*, *light*, *symbols of the faith*, and *artistic displays* to attract and engage the postmodern generation in multi-sensory worship gatherings that connected back to an ancient faith and communicated more than the visuals of the modern church that divorced the ancient elements of Christianity from spiritual culture.

In the previous chapter a methodology was established by synthesizing various elements of other Baudrillardian scholars that will be used here to analyze these symbols. First, the visual vintage faith worship symbolic phenomenon will be introduced. Second, possible avenues of simulation analysis will be suggested. Third, Baudrillardian theory will be introduced where

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[6] Barry Brummett asserts that current texts in a mediated world more resemble multi-layered, complex texts or mosaics as described in *Rhetoric in Popular Culture* instead of direct communication texts.

applicable. Lastly, elements of vintage faith worship gatherings will be named according to the four-stage typology of signs that Baudrillard discussed leading towards an actualized simulation. Each of these eight elements was analyzed according to this methodology and will be discussed following a brief contextual introduction to Kimball's vintage faith ideology.

Baudrillard speaks truthfully calling America saturated with simulated reality. When Kimball and the vintage church began to reproduce a past norm in the present because it connected with the new audience a similar conclusion was at hand. But, how long will it take for this phenomenon to be a counterfeit reality, a produced worship tool, and ultimately a spiraling simulation? In order to understand Kimball's urging to use vintage elements, a contrast between postmodern and modern churches from Kimball's words will be needed.

## Background to Phenomena

Kimball's new phenomenon of vintage emerging worship was not new. He explained that it was far from new and only a progression in the line of an ever-progressing worship timeline starting in the historical text of Genesis and prophetically ending at the throne room of God in Revelation. Vintage worship elements were only a part of this progression. Kimball said, "The Bible repeatedly talks about new emerging forms of worship. This cannot be considered 'trendy.' We were simply part of another time period undergoing change in how emerging generations ascribe worth and praise to God. This type of change has been happened [sic] over and over throughout history" (*Worship* 7). Change was inevitably perpetuated by time and culture. As time progressed and new generations were given power new forms of business, sport, art, parenting, church, etc. developed.

The new time and culture that Kimball addressed in his text was that of the millennial

post-modern generation. They were different. They were multi-sensory. They were spiritually hungry. Kimball strived to develop a worship gathering filled with ancient environments and elements that met their multi-sensory hunger. He said that it should not be a surprise that new generations were not engaging with older forms of worship that were meant for a different people (*Worship* 9). The Baby Boomer mentality of church developed the seeker-sensitive modern form, and the millennial generation sought to create a new form of worship while wrestling with the cultural changes. Kimball concluded, "So, as our current culture moves from a modern to postmodern world, it is only natural that new forms of worship are arising… We shouldn't be threatened by it, nor should we condemn forms of worship that don't feel comfortable to us. It doesn't mean previous forms of worship are invalid; just that new expressions are emerging – and will continue to emerge" (*Worship* 9). American culture filled with mediated forms of all kinds bled into the church worship gathering. Baudrillard said that America was the great, simulated monster and the best depiction of a simulated culture fully embraced.

*Seeker-Sensitive to Emerging Progression*

In the 1970s and 1980s, the church was a dying force that had little power in the day-to-day of the masses of individuals concerning themselves with Eastern and progressive religion. According to Kimball God used leaders and church bodies all over America to produce seeker-sensitive worship services that grew out of a desire to reach modern people who had disowned the church in their personal lives. Kimball said:

> The emphasis on creating a place for seekers to come meant emphasizing the weekend service as the entry point of the church. Contemporary architecture was developed for worship buildings along with new approaches to preaching and

> communication. Dramas, videos, and production staff were added to larger churches to help make the weekend services more professional. Even Garth Brooks-like headset microphones were used to show that we really are keeping up with the times and are hip to current culture. (*Church* 103)

This shift to culturally relevant architecture aligned with Kilde's assertion of generations past doing the same thing to reach specific culture groups. Seeker churches began to leave out elements in the church that had been used for generation in order to avoid offending seekers. Seekers were defined as those that desired a form of spirituality without necessarily knowing which religion to choose. By introducing culturally relevant elements to the worship service, a new form of church emerged.

The seeker-sensitive church movement targeted a Baby Boomer generation that preferred business-like professional space and lighting with basic forms of contemporary Christianity. The crosses were removed, the stained glass windows were replaced, and the symbols of an ancient faith were discarded. Baudrillard would argue that these choices created a first-order counterfeit environment that visually represented a business presentation or performance instead of a church. The seeker-sensitive movement progressed the church to a full-order simulation with raised stage, catchy band performances, and a professional speaker with projected user-friendly Bible verses plastered on over-sized video screens. The user-friendly, non-offensive seeker-sensitive church represented something radically different than the symbol laced cathedrals and gothic architecture of generations past. The vintage faith was on the heels of this simulation. But, it recaptured some of the elements of the gothic cathedrals and architecture of the dark ages. Even these medieval creations were a simulation of financial wealth and not the grassroots formation of house churches seen in the New Testament Scriptures. Overall, the general

progression from seeker-sensitive, professional, business architecture to symbolically rich emerging church vintage faith worship gathering environments was not a return to the vintage as Kimball asserted, but it was a new systematizing of an emerging norm. Baudrillard warned about developing mediated reality without meaning (*Simulacra* 86).

For example, Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois was respected as one of the most successful seeker-sensitive churches in the United States. Pastor Bill Hybels led Willow Creek to become one of the trend-setting seeker-sensitive churches in this time. Bill and Lynne Hybels coauthored the book *Rediscovering Church: The Story and Vision of Willow Creek Community Church* in 1997. In the text, Hybels and Hybels defined and described the seeker-sensitive approach to church services. Kimball used Willow Creek as an example of a modernly minded seeker-sensitive church. Figure 1 shows Willow Creek's main sanctuary that looks visually like what Kimball described as a modern style church. The seeker-sensitive worship environment was a professional atmosphere and void of ancient worship elements (Willow).

**Fig. 1 Willow Creek Auditorium, Meyer Sound Laboratories Inc., South Barrington, IL**

The seeker-sensitive church movement created a new cultural norm, but the emerging church, in contrast, was the next progression of a new norm. Leaders in the emerging generation created new forms of worship space as they gained influence in churches. "We very likely could see the pattern of past generation repeated. As churches lost touch with the culture and didn't connect with younger generations, the seeker-sensitive movement was born. This time, however, it is the seeker-sensitive movement that loses touch as it grows more and more disconnected with the heart of emerging generations," says Kimball (*Church* 103). The new form was founded on shifting values. As the seeker-sensitive movement tried to reach the Baby Boomer generation, the emerging church was reaching postmoderns.

Kimball charted the shifting values of postmodern emerging generations compared to modern seeker-sensitive values. Modern churches replaced the stained glass with video screens, but the emerging church brought back the stained glass on the video screens. Modern churches

arranged the room so that individuals could see the stage in a comfortable theatre type seating arrangement, but emerging church rearranged the space to focus on community and strived to produce the feeling of a living room or coffeehouse while worshipping. Modern churches used modern technology to communicate with contemporary flare, but the emerging church was a place where church was seen in connection with the ancient, even mystical (and used technology to do so) (Kimball, *Church* 105).

The differences between the modern and postmodern approach to church worship environments were discussed in length in Kimball's text. The differences between the two forms justified the need for the newly established vintage faith worship gatherings. Without a proper understanding of the progression of forms in Christian worship practice, this study would not place vintage faith worship gatherings in a context, resulting in a simulated representation. Figure 2 is an example of Kimball's Vintage Faith Church incorporating ancient elements within the worship gathering (Kimball, "Wonderful").

**Fig. 2 Resurrection Weekend 2007, Vintage Faith Church, Santa Cruz, CA**

The importance of this shift in church worship forms gave justification for the importance of critical analysis. Kimball urged other pastors and church leaders to incorporate vintage faith worship elements into services where they desired to see postmodern, post-Christian individuals attend. He discussed *the band*, *technology*, *video screen broadcasts*, *life-stage groups*, *ancient structures*, *light*, *symbols of the faith*, and *artistic displays* supporting the value change between seeker-sensitive and emerging church worship gatherings. These eight elements were a portion of Kimball's overall ideal of creating multi-sensory, interactive, and visually stimulating worship gatherings for the postmodern post-Christian targets of the emerging church. He argued that their inclusion in worship gatherings would create better meaning, Baudrillardian analysis was applied to find theoretical support.

## The Band

As stated before, the current worship service of contemporary seeker-sensitive churches, with no vintage faith affiliation, produced a counterfeit worship style similar to a band of rock musicians. As the older phenomenon of rock-worship spread across the country, musicians were producers of the ur-reality that lead worshipers to a false sense of authentic worship. Worshippers went to the same "show" each week but instead of Sonny and Cher they found themselves being entertained by The Praise Team of volunteer and professional musicians. The Praise Team simulacra spiraled out of control as the old lights and the new lights no longer connected and engaged with the rock star quality worship leader. The old lights enjoyed the hymns of "deep rooted spiritual doctrine" and the new lights found the setting to be aesthetically showy. The worshipers then sought worship elsewhere. The simulation was complete when

worship bands produced records and videos depicting their worship settings for sale. The rock band in the front counterfeited the rock bands in other atmospheres. They produced records of a service that was fundamentally not supposed to be entertainment driven, and lastly sold these records to cover cost or make profit. A simulated worship service ensued when the rock band in the front was used to represent authentic worship focused not on entertainment yet the sales, stage, mikes, lights, and aura of rock concerts were still present. They replaced reality with ur-reality. It was a show based on anti-entertainment. A false rendition of preached theology. It was what it did not want to be – a simulated service. The rock band of the seeker-sensitive church assumed a completed reality and had to be changed when moved into the vintage faith worship gathering.

In one such venue of a simulated rock concert, journalist Rick Levin comments about the discrepancy between the actions and intentions of the Creation '99 Festival:

> I have a difficult time locating any similarities between what Jesus says and does, and what the people – in particular the organizers – [at this festival] said and did… Jesus is a beacon of righteousness who leads the way through a dark world to eternal peace, love, and eternal salvation; the Jesus of [the festival] is a blue-light special, pointing you to the quick fix of a righteous bargain in the shopping mall of endless consumption.
>
> These two versions of Christ, and the premises they entail, are antithetical. They negate one another, leading me to a very unsettling, unpleasant conclusion [about the festival]: It was, in the end, a very un-Christian affair. (para. 56-7)

Although this event was a well-established Christian concert venue that did not take place inside of a church worship service, the point is still supported by the discrepancy that develops between

calling an event one thing and acting in a way that connects to a similar event with ulterior motives. When secular music was given a new set of lyrics, the same music – although amoral – connected to other songs with non-worship lyrics. The connection that happened in the audience created a simulated worship environment like previously mentioned. In this article, Rick Levin also talked about putting Jesus on sale, the established third-order production stage of the rock band simulation in seeker-sensitive worship environments.

In contrast, introducing the element of The Band in the vintage faith gatherings is a difficult task because many pastors and teachers approach the inclusion of music in vastly different ways. Kimball, being a former musical artist, incorporated many music elements aurally and visually. He replaced the rock band with a familiar musical style – the unplugged version of the rock band. As already noted, Kimball introduced the coffeehouse sounds of an MTV Unplugged Cranberries show at a worship service and the postmodern generation connected well with the authentically visual spirituality associated with the coffeehouse atmosphere. In the current generation, vintage worship attempted to produce a feeling of relaxation in the public worship setting.

It is unclear if this was a phase in the process of simulation or a representation. Ultimately, representing another form of music still produced a simulated reality within the context of new vintage faith worship gatherings. Representing a different style of music did not negate simulation. Instead, the steps of simulation were still a counterfeited coffeehouse atmosphere, produced phenomenon as it is duplicated by other vintage faith type churches, and simulated when the new phenomenon becomes a defining aspect of emerging churches instead of a support of proper worship principles. Evidence of this could be seen in the text as Kimball attempted to separate vintage faith worship from modern worship, yet he included many of the

same symbolic associations with the rock band. The elements of entertainment remained in tact when the band played from the front of the stage. It appeared that the sound was a welcomed reprieve from the performance-based worship settings of the seeker-sensitive worship services, but it did not answer the deeper issues of simulation. When a band played from a platform – no matter what their style – and asked to lead as a band, a performance enhanced worship service must ensue. When the visual display of the worship service contradicted the rhetoric used in the service, one had to take precedent. It was no wonder that the audience acted like an audience at a concert. They were prompted visually to do so.

When Kimball first started to consider the idea of starting a worship gathering for emerging generations at Santa Cruz Bible Church (his second attempt at establishing a church body that engages the emerging generation) he took a mixed group of believers and non-believers to an excellent, seeker-sensitive contemporary worship service. This church was geared toward people with a modern mindset. What surprised Kimball was that most of the focus group's concerns and discomforts were *visual* elements of the worship service (Kimball, *Church* 134). The visual aspect was crucial to them. This focus group experiment gave structure to the rest of Kimball's practical applications of vintage faith values.

One of the questions that the focus group asked was, "Why does the band disappear behind a curtain? It feels like a performance" (Kimball, *Church* 137). This comment took the previous argument even further. Kimball, being a musician himself, obviously missed the elements of entertainment presentation in his answer to this comment. He said that the band in a vintage faith worship gathering should consider building a stage that goes out farther into the crowd like the bands U2, and KISS are doing (*Church* 137). He noted that bands are seeing close proximity to the audience as a necessity instead of being raised up in front. Obviously,

most of the worship band positioning was practical in nature so that all people in the audience could see what was happening, but there was a great deal of communication happening through the positioning of the musicians. Kimball said in the next paragraph, "…I am becoming uneasy with the way we call attention to our worship leaders or bands as they face the congregation, usually with colored lighting highlighting their presence" (*Church* 138). Kimball was caught in wanting to let elements of the band scene into church and barring other elements. When a choice like this was made to allow some of the elements of entertainment into the church, the entire meaning came with it. The audience, as active participants, made the connection intellectually with what they have experienced and what they were experiencing. The congruent forms suggested how the audience members participated in both atmospheres.

By building a stage farther into the audience, Kimball did not stop the spiral of simulation. Instead, he continued to participate in the same problems that the seeker-sensitive church had by putting musicians in front that appeared to be an entertainment band. It did not matter what kind of music they were playing to the focus group, it mattered that they visually looked like an entertainment band. In this vintage faith suggestion, the four stages of simulation present in the seeker-sensitive churches were still present.

Kimball addressed the problem with entertainment style worship bands later by suggesting another method of preventing entertainment style music. This method created a new symbol. To his credit, the suggestion of moving the band to the back of the room and stationing a cross in the middle of the platform redirected the attention from the band to the cross. This choice connected the visual rhetoric of assuming submission by being behind the audience and refocusing the center of the environment on what was supposed to be thought about in the first place. Kimball credited Josh Fox with the visual changes when he said:

> Josh Fox, the worship leader at our vintage-faith gatherings, often sets up the worship band in the back of the room in which we gather for worship. He may start from up front at the beginning of the service, but after a transition, he will continue leading form the rear. Not only does this keep the band form being the focus of attention, it also adds to the sense that we are all worshiping together as a community without any of us being more significant than the others… However we do it, I think we need to get away from making the worship leader and band the unintentional focal point when we worship. (*Church* 138)

By redirecting the attention from the band to the element of the cross, Kimball's suggestion stopped the first-order simulation of counterfeiting by giving the worship environment a context. The visual and verbal rhetoric coincided and there was no loss in meaning. In the original example of building a stage farther out – *like other bands currently using extended stages* – was only a duplication of an entertainment phenomenon in an anti-entertainment setting resulting in falsified reality and ultimately a simulated worship environment. This was one example of how Baudrillard's analysis helped to explain a difficult process of missed meaning in the vintage faith churches' visual and verbal rhetoric.

Moving the band to the back of the auditorium created a new symbol of corporate worship gatherings instead of entertainment driven worship gatherings. By creating a new symbol in a new context, Kimball alleviated the tension between the medium of the rock band and the message of entertainment in church gatherings. Moving the band to the back of the auditorium reestablished meaning giving the environment an honest contextualization. This element communicated a multi-staged simulation associated practice with past meaning and distorting present meaning with falsified representation.

Technology-Centered

Introducing technology in the vintage faith church included many elements, but for this argument was summarized differently. When referring to technology, most of the elements analyzed were connected to visual presentations on large screens in the auditorium. Kimball encouraged vintage faith worship leaders to support teaching points by using visual displays of artwork coupled with verses and other direct teaching elements (*Church* 188-9*)*. The inclusion of visuals to enhance Scripture created an environment mixing visual with printed media that created a new dimension of representation. Leaders should, according to Kimball, "*Project photos, art, or graphics with Scripture text on screens*. Using ancient art with Scripture provides another opportunity not only to reinforce the value of the visual but also to convey that Christianity is not a modern religion" (*Church* 189). When Christianity was framed like this it created a context that communicated along with the symbols. Kimball urged people to use personal photography of ancient symbols, photographs of stained glass artwork, and Gustave Doré paintings as long as a certain level of excellence was communicated without poor quality visual renditions of these works.

Integrating Baudrillard offered different conclusions. One of the foundational truths of simulation discussed by Baudrillard was that a duplicated work losses the nature of the original piece; simulation was a denaturing process. A reproduced masterpiece does not have the same allure and mystique that the original possessed. This was an example like that of the fake plastic tree discussed earlier. Each time the object was duplicated it lost a sense of the original. When the final level of duplication was achieved, a similar product was garnished lacking the former responsibilities of symbolic resemblance. Foss, Foss, and Trapp characterize the counterfeited stage of the reproduced artwork and called it a mimic or copy. "Thus, the signs in this era are

only counterfeit – they mimic or copy the symbolic obligations of feudal societies and move from reflecting a basic reality to copying it, masking it, or perverting it" (Foss, Foss, and Trapp 309).

Foss, Foss, and Trapp referred to Baudrillard's analogy of the robot duplicating human production as the best representation of the sign as representative production, the second stage and the third-order of simulated progression:

> The capacity to duplicate human functioning is crucial, according to Baudrillard, because it means that signs and the ability to control the code have overtaken production itself, and the relationship between production and signs is reversed. In other words, the equivalent of the human being can be duplicated repeatedly, creating an entire level of signs that no longer refers to but surpasses the human. (Foss, Foss, and Trapp 310)

In the use of technologically produced masterpieces, the sign (vintage elements combined with technology) became a distinction of the church worship practice.

The phase of the counterfeit was introduced with technology-centered elements in the vintage faith church. Copied, masked, and perverted reality ensued when photography of great pieces of art like stained glass or Doré were reproduced in digital form from pixilated bits of color aligned in a projector and plastered on the wall. Instead of the original meaning a new meaning emerged so that the onlooker walked into a building and saw the ancient and technological interwoven and responded, "Oh, this is a vintage church." This new meaning had value in Kimball's vintage faith worship gatherings creating new references to the ancient past. But, that was what Baudrillard called the production order of simulated signs. When the masterpiece was duplicated it created a counterfeit reality, but the second step of simulation was

established when the sign communicated an alternative meaning to the intended symbolic representation. There was no appearance of a final stage of simulated reality in this example.

Technology in the vintage faith church was not limited solely to projecting still slides on video screens. Kimball also used other forms of mediated communication during the worship gatherings. He said:

> The use of street interviews conducted at local campuses and malls can help Christians gain insights on the thoughts of nonbelievers and enable nonbelievers sitting in the pews to hear their thoughts voiced. And conducting the interviews can prompt those you interview to think a little deeper, or at least differently, than they would have if you hadn't come along with your questions and camera. They may even visit your service just to see themselves on the big screen. I know of one person we interviewed who ended up attending and eventually became a believer. (*Church* 152)

The church was originally instituted as a local church body that was to be focused outside its walls. Missional churches, a key distinctive of emerging churches established by Gibbs and Bolger, used the weekly gathering as a launching point for the rest of the week. The weekly gathering was not the apex of the church body but a foundation for further interaction. This was a major distinction and a large stumbling block in the usage of this kind of mediated teaching in the vintage church.

Projected lives from outside the church body created a stereotypical reality for those watching the videos. Not only was the video a simulation – void of interactional relationship and possible feedback between actor and participant – but also created a stereotype of "nonbelievers." Kimball concluded saying that he believed this type of technology would be

used more in vintage worship gatherings.

In a similar element to video interviews – listing – Hakanen said that lists created a reality of stereotyped phenomenon that represented everyone yet no one. After a brief discussion of lists as simulated reality creating a want for something because it was established as valuable through ranking, Hakanen concluded:

> The lists provide greater public information and do carry out an important marketing function. On the other hand, lists too easily define everything as quantity, common, accessible, technological, digital, etc. rather than as quality, unique, obscure, artistry, and analogy… The lists, like all simulations, "do not so much adapt to a common taste as they adapt that taste, and it is a taste wherein wanting is more important than liking" (Wagner 1995: 62). (252).

The purpose of the list became a bargaining chip between consumers arguing that this product was better than that product not because it was established with greater practical or aesthetic value but because it happened to be ranked higher on "the list." Hakanen said, "What is popular is good; what is good is on the lists; what is on the list is popular. This tautology makes value inherent in the individual product benign" (249). This same line could be adopted to refer to technology in vintage faith worship gatherings. What is *real* is the *nonbeliever*; the *nonbeliever* is on the *video screen*; the *video screen* is *reality*.

Integrating Baudrillard, this critic realized that these videos broadcasted individuals that spoke for others yet represented solely their opinion. That person was real, but the persona created for those outside the church was a simulated reality based on a single interview. It was a counterfeit produced in the mind of the audience, a simulated reference to unreality. The church was isolated from reality, but the vintage pastor brought the outside into the church worship

gathering. It is the inverse of what the church was intended to be, inside out. The phenomenon reached a fully simulated reality as the purpose of the videos – understanding the unbeliever – represented a false reality – a summarized and generalized nonbeliever.

Baudrillard warned about this type of shifting mediated phenomenon as a societal black hole of destructive meaning. Kimball concluded, "Whatever plan we adopt to address the dilemma faced by seeker-sensitive services, the goal is to create a culture and a church community that will impact people in the emerging culture" (*Church* 108). By "creating a culture" emerging churches established a new social order of acceptance. Baudrillard warned, "Everywhere socialization is measured by the exposure to media messages. Whoever is underexposed to the media is desocialized or virtually asocial" (*Simulacra* 80). The vintage faith church created a new social order of those who understand the cultural shift and those who do not. The "media" in the vintage faith church was more than the technology used in worship gatherings. It also included knowing about emerging ideal, emerging authors, emergent texts, and living the lifestyle of emerging people. Becoming conversant and socialized with the emerging church was deeper than incorporating technologically reproduced symbols in worship.

If Baudrillard was correct the emerging church was a new establishment of those who "get it" and those who do not. It was a simulated shift in values from the anciently socialized in a new society. It was the mark of a new era based on a previous era without the context of the ancient. According to Baudrillard, the ancient meanings imploded as the emerging phenomenon used vintage symbols without the originally intended meaning. Simulated emerging elements replaced the elements of the past for new elements in the present. A simulated reality also replaced a past reality. The ancient sign, as a signifier of worship trend, not only anchored Christianity as an ancient religion, but also established vintage faith churches according to

similar criteria. Such meaning was not present in Kimball's text. If the church reproduced ancient forms it was a vintage faith church. Reality was not governed by intention but symbolic connection. When the symbols represented affiliation to a progressive worship style instead of an ancient faith it progressed towards simulation. Once the sign associated a new reality with ancient symbolism, the meaning of vintage faith symbolism imploded into simulated reality.

Kimball encouraged the use of technology in vintage faith worship gatherings to enhance the overall feeling of the environment. Kimball said that technology was an attempt to experience the ancient through a new production. However, this paradox simulated an ancient form of Christianity rebroadcasted through media forms that often disconnected the new audience with the old audience. The polarization of reality and representation, according to Baudrillard, produced a new meaning and a simulated phenomenon. Reproducing these symbols without original context created a new simulated environment that claimed the rights to being "emerging" through "ancient" semiotics. The polarization was an implosion of meaning in the present through technology that lost past virtue in the visually obsessed present.

Video Screen Broadcasts

Another form of technology used by churches to reach younger generations was the separation of the church body into different rooms within the church building for aesthetic appeal and changes in musical preference while broadcasting the same sermon on video screens. Kimball did not promote video broadcasting because he had yet to see good results, but he noted that some churches were creating multiple spaces for different kinds of people to gather under the same name. Kimball said that churches broadcast the same sermon to at least two different rooms – within the same building or different buildings – and changed the music so that the

church could meet the preferences of people with different musical tastes (*Church* 105). This technique was used to attract a younger crowd through different forms of music while keeping the older crowd through traditional forms. According to Kimball, it resulted in the attraction of Baby Boomers that were already associated with another church body (Kimball, *Church* 106). The initial reports were that younger people were not interested in this form. However, Kimball did say that new technologies would be introduced into the vintage faith church, and he was not opposed to the idea of broadcasting sermons on video screens (*Church* 105). This point was analyzed with caution not naming a current trend in vintage faith churches but projecting a possible reality that may be addressed and encouraged by vintage churches in the future. Other contemporary churches like Ada Bible Church in Ada, MI (adabible.org) and many others practice this type of worship gathering.

In a heavily mediated society, it should not be a surprise that churches made changes to the church service and simulated the relational interaction between speaker and audience through the powers of video broadcast. A sermon had been an intimate exposure to truth through the vehicle of public speaking. If the relational banters between communicator and audience were lost there would be a significant break down in the entire communication process. The intimacy of truth would be lost in a one way broadcast without the possibility of immediate feedback. The speaker was fooled into thinking that they were reaching more people when in reality the audience members were divorcing the teachings from their actual lives. This sounds like terribly harsh criticism, but a personal anecdote serves as proof.

In the critic's current employment, attendance was required at convocation on a different part of campus from where the actual meeting was taking place. The university started by only broadcasting the speaker and playing different music sets live in each venue – although similar to

what Kimball was referring to, the extra room was needed for numbers not a gap in musical preferences. Over time the broadcasts began to include the entire service. Musicians were no longer separate from the broadcast. Administrative and academic colleagues were able to watch the entire service on the video screens. "Watching" is an intentional term. The sanctuary where people sat visually looked more like a movie theatre with plush seats arranged towards the empty stage and eyes angled vertically to observe what would happen next on the screen. It was a peak into reality not an interactive service. When the lead musician asked the audience to stand up, the audience in the actual room stood to their feet, but not one of the one thousand people in the other venue stood up. There was no pressure to obey. There was no accountability. There was no offense if the directions were ignored. He could not see the people sitting. The alternative venue was devoid of relationship to the musician and subsequently no one obeyed. Kimball introduced the use of similar phenomenon in vintage faith churches. Integration of Baudrillard's analysis was needed to explain the misuse of meaning.

The audience had the choice of ignoring the musician because he was mediated. Ignoring the message is the prerogative of the masses in reaction to media. Baudrillard asked:

> Evidently, there is a paradox in this inextricable conjunction of the masses and the media: do the media neutralize meaning and produce unformed [*informe*] or informed [*informée*] masses, or is it the masses who victoriously resist the media by directing or absorbing all the messages that the media produce without responding to them? (*Simulacra* 84)

Whichever of Baudrillard's two assertions was correct is of little value to this discussion. The important part was his acknowledgement that the medium of media did not necessitate a reaction from the audience. It was a simulated reality operating in a different time and/or space without

accountability and demand.

If this was the reaction of the crowd to the musicians what relationship was introduced when the communication style changed to a sermonic monologue? When the guitars were put to rest and the piano ceased to resonate, the reactions to the speaker continued in like form. The audience had to react to the speaker in the same way they reacted to the musicians. The medium had become the message. The medium said, "We are here, you are there. We are primary, and you are secondary. We are interactive and you are watching us."

Baudrillard warned of this kind of mediated seduction. He introduced the basic assertion of Marshall McLuhan that the *medium is the message*. Baudrillard called this assertion the key formula in the age of simulation (*Simulacra* 82). The use and abuse of information through mediated forms lends itself to intentional and accidental manipulation. This anecdote was problematic and an example of unintentionally simulated environments created by well-intended individuals. However, the medium of broadcasting had become the dominant order of the room when the audience did not interact with the actor on the screen.

Baudrillard said, "Fundamentally, it is still the message that lends credibility to the medium, that gives the medium its determined, distinct status as the intermediary of communication" (*Simulacra* 82). The broadcasted sermon was nothing if there was not a message tied to the flickering lights on the screen. The message was not the sermon, but it was the non-relational interaction (or lack of interaction) between speaker and audience that taught the meaning. Baudrillard continued, "…beyond this neutralization of all content, one could still expect to manipulate the medium in its form and to transform the real by using the impact of the medium as form" (*Simulacra* 82). It became the disconnect between a sermon and its counterfeit – the broadcast.

With this integration of theory, the naming of simulation phases led to an understanding of mismanaged meaning. It was the simulation of a church service that was a counterfeit of an hour-long movie instead of a direct address from the musicians and speaker. The sermon was then produced as recorded video to be played outside the boundaries of time and it entered the third-order of simulation, production. Produced for the masses, the sermon lost the touch of intimate connection to a specific audience. Finally, the simulation of a similar phenomenon became complete as the grade school child boasted of watching Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in class. The same could be said for sermons heard video broadcasted outside the time and space of the public delivery. The boy saw King and the internet audience saw a pixilated image of a vintage faith teacher on a 13.3" widescreen computer monitor. Both watched a counterfeit, produced and simulated. The schoolboy saw the counterfeit, the piecemeal production of an actual message broadcast far after the death of the Civil Rights hero. Perhaps it was not intentionally manipulated, but Baudrillard stated that the message was manipulated, as the medium became the message. The broadcast became the message that all sermons devoid of space and time do not necessitate obedience and immediate application. Perhaps this was the reason no one stood. The video was timeless, why should it be obeyed immediately?

Video broadcasts introduced to the vintage faith church have produced simulated reality as a single nonbeliever was stereotyped to represent the regional voice of nonbelievers. It was impossible to capture relational intimacy by video broadcasting sermons and it was impossible to relate the actual beliefs of an entire area through the voices of a few individuals. Kimball's idealism of using video productions to aid in worship form invited simulated reality into the created reality of vintage faith church worship gatherings. Both video broadcasted sermons and duplicated symbolic artwork produced simulated reality.

Life-Stage Groups

Kimball introduced life-stage groups as a vintage faith phenomenon in the text. He supported the idea of creating age-specific church forms in order to reach postmoderns in current churches. He suggested incorporating post-seeker-sensitive values in the worship gathering to attract emerging generations (*Church* 106). This was essentially a suggestion to build a church on age distinctions. The hope of the main church was that the "twenty-something" or "young adult" service would be a feeder system to the greater church body as the participants matured. It would be like multiple contextualized middle schools feeding into a single high school. Kimball said of one church that tried this experiment, "But the leadership of the church finally realized that when people hit thirty, they still didn't want to attend the other services. Who they were and how they learned and worshiped were fundamentally different" (*Church* 106). The alternative was to allow a postmodern church to form within a church – which Gibbs and Bolger explained to be more effective in the United Kingdom than the United States.[7] The services became distinct due to value differences and forms. However, the services also became very distinct in terms of age.

The use of age divisions in church was not a new concept. Sunday Schools were set up in the same age divisions reflecting normal grade school education. By dividing personnel according to similarities, the church was able to instruct children, pre-teens, teenagers, young adults, newly married adults, parents, empty nesters, and senior citizens according to their

[7] The idea of hosting a "church within a church" is a difficult topic for Kimball. In all discussions regarding this concept, he seemed to be ardent about the fact that it would not work in America. His conclusions seemed to be shaped by his first attempt at starting a vintage faith church, Graceland. For future readers of Kimball, his insights should be cautiously challenged as the words for a wounded man in ministry. However, his insights should be ardently respected and justified because he is a man put through scrutiny for trying to do something creatively unique. It seems like the modern and postmodern church could use more creatively unique thinkers like Kimball.

preferred educational styles.

Naming of the phases of education in the church would help make more sense of the theoretical integration of Baudrillard's theory. The idea of generational divisions in churches was not a representation of Scriptural teaching but a simulation of the current educational process. Although it can be argued that churches should be the educational hub of the Christian community, the way Christians were to educate should look different than the educational systems instilled according to age generations.

The ultimate end in churches due to the separation of generations was no interaction between different generations in teaching besides the teacher and a large group of younger people. Churches, and Kimball's suggestion of Life-stage groups, were metaphorically a schoolhouse with separate teaching ages with an older teacher leading the learning.

The family metaphor was a better representation of how teaching should be done in Scripture.[8] Deuteronomy 6 enlisted parents to teach their children as they go, teach in moments of ordinary happenings and in special occasions. In Proverbs 2 the teacher taught wisdom but addressed the hearer as "son." These passages were the cornerstone of education in the metaphor of the family. Likewise, in Ephesians 2:19 and 3:14-15 those belonging to God – Christians – were addressed as "members of the household of God" and "…the Father of our Lord Jesus Chris whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." The family metaphor dominated the early church teachings as the preferred stylistic metaphor for education. When Kimball encouraged Life-stage groups, establishing new boundaries according to age, it became a counterfeited reality representing the educational system of the day and not the educational system of the early church. Kimball said that he was trying to anchor the vintage faith as an

[8] Idea originated from Dr. Michael Mitchell in a classroom discussion.

ancient faith. But, he copied a current metaphor hoping to communicate ancient faith. Scottie May, Beth Posterski, Catherine Stonehouse, and Linda Cannell emphasized the importance of the education metaphor when she said, "Although often more subtle or implicit… metaphors tend to shape everything that is done, even without the awareness of the leadership staff. The dominant metaphor tends to become the ministry model" (May et. al. 10). The meaning was destroyed when the context of the worship gathering communicated one thing and the dominant metaphor communicated another. Kimball's life-stage groups entered a second-order counterfeited reality and began to lose value as a connection to an ancient faith.

By duplicating educational methods, those in church administration were communicating the same things that those in school administration were communicating. The church, in the current teaching style, was a simulated educational environment complete with religious curriculum non-contextualized to the actual church but written for a broader denominational force. Children, teens, seniors, etc. were all expected to have ascertained certain skills and knowledge by the time they passed from one "class" to the next. Why had the modern church ceased to function as an inter-generational, family, community and adopted divisional educational strategies? The modern mind sought scientific classification, order, arrangement, and divided material into structure. The church was a reflection of its time. The modern church, Sunday School being only one example, operated like present modern education. Kimball's life-stage concept did not change the dominant metaphor but continued the spiral of simulated education farther from the source – the Biblical family metaphor. Life-stage groups produced the same dividing lines increasing generational gaps and a simulated educational experience. Naming the phenomenon as such showed the power of mismanaged meaning to surface among new teachings in Kimball's text.

Ancient Structures

Another of the comments made by Kimball's focus group was, "It didn't look like a church in there; it looked like a Wal-Mart" (*Church* 134). What they meant was that the building had few unique features and represented a large industrial structure instead of an ancient cathedral – what they were used to seeing as a church. It looked like a chain church, something corporate and unspiritual. Kimball suggested to readers, "…bring a sense of the ancient into a contemporary room… We've even used old props from Easter musicals on the stage. Roman pillars communicate that something ancient is being discussed here" (*Church* 134-5).

Kimball wanted others to incorporate elements different from the modern norm. By producing a stage "without tricks and flare" that has Roman pillars – often linked to a time of death in Christianity – communicated an absence of ancient conversation. Meaning was stretched when ancient semiology was needed to represent ancient faith in a new church. Kimball concluded, "Remember, the point is not just to look cool but to do anything that helps convey the fact that Christianity is a non-modern religion. I personally would love to meet in a medieval cathedral with pews – with cushions on the pews and a heated sanctuary!" (*Church* 135).

Vintage Central in Norwood, Ohio and The Bridge Church in Pontiac, Michigan were two examples of new churches using ancient buildings to incorporate vintage elements in worship gatherings. Figure 3 is St. Elizabeth. Originally a Roman Catholic church building erected in 1903, it was sold to Vineyard Central in 1995 and currently houses weddings and funerals, concerts and parties, neighbors in need, and neighborhood outreaches in Norwood (St. Elizabeth).

**Fig. 3 St. Elizabeth, Vineyard Central, Norwood, OH**

Figure 4 is The Lafayette Grand building in Pontiac, Michigan where The Bridge Church rented space on Sunday mornings for worship. The Lafayette Grand was originally constructed as a Masonic Temple in 1923, but it is believed that the Masons lost it over tax litigation. The building's interior was refurbished into a banquet hall in 1997 after being used as a courthouse. This "modern first-century church" was smaller in size than other vintage faith type churches, but still had many of the same elements in their worship gatherings that Kimball claimed as ancient-modern elements including displaying the Eucharist in the center of the worship gathering, gathering on couches to create a casual living room type of environment, and gathering in smaller groups than the typical mega-church growth in the Suburban Detroit area (Lafayette Grand).


**Fig. 4 Lafayette Grand, The Bridge Church, Pontiac, MI**

Integrating Baudrillard in this element was not a difficult connection. The same ironic idea was perpetuated in Baudrillard's journalistic memoirs when he spoke of a house that burned down, yet the family was able to build an "older" house with the amount of insurance money they had collected (*Cool Memories* 199). It was a façade, a front, an edifice, without substance. In and of itself, using an ancient building was not a bad suggestion, but communicated a mismanagement in meaning. It was a farce, a simulation, to incorporate décor without a hint of usefulness beyond the aesthetic The accumulation of olden artifacts to communicate an ancient truth disconnected the past with today's reality. The teachings of Jesus in connection and application today were left in the ancient when the faith is only seen as ancient. Participants unable to contextualize the church in a modern Wal-mart society associated the church building with another time, and why wouldn't the teachings and applications of truth also be associated

with an ancient time and irrelevant to current culture? The information and meaning that the artifacts communicated were divorcing the significance of a progressive context.

These older church buildings were not a completed simulation. Instead, this phenomenon communicated a second-order simulation counterfeit using ancient architecture to communicate age without the values of age intact. Meaning was lost when vintage faith churches chose older buildings to represent a falsified reality. Like Baudrillard's story of the older insurance-built house, meaning compromised reality establishing a visually inaccurate picture of age and timelessness. Kimball's Vintage Faith Church had recently moved to the First Presbyterian Church in Santa Cruz, CA. The new space was extremely "vintage" according to Kimball, but they struggled trying to incorporate ancient elements into a place with fixed pews, stained glass, and ancient architecture ("Why"). The ancient architecture of First Presbyterian Church was an alluring aspect of the property for Kimball's three-year-old church plant. The allusion it created for worship participants communicated great depth although new struggles still existed in forming and communicating a new approach to church worship settings. The misdirection in meaning constituted a second-order counterfeited reality according to Baudrillard.

## Lighting the Mood

Kimball's focus group also commented, "It was too bright in there; I thought church would be darker" (Kimball, *Church* 136). A major visual change between modern and postmodern worship settings was the communication of darkness as spirituality. In the seeker-sensitive approach, light meant purity and spirituality. The attachment of ancient meditation forms of darkness and silence communicated positive spirituality to postmoderns. Kimball jokingly suggested that it might have be the conditioning from all the years that Christians had to

worship in the darkness of the catacombs (*Church* 136).

One example of vintage faith churches using darkness to convey spirituality was this gallery opening at Mosaic | 5619 in Austin, Texas. Figure 5 emphasized darkness and strategic lighting (Worship).

**Fig. 5 Worship Gallery, Mosaic | 5619, Austin, TX**

Whatever the exact reason for this shift there were things that the setting of darkness communicated to emerging generations. Kimball said:

> Time and time again I hear how important the darker environment is to those at our vintage faith worship gathering… Perhaps in some way the whole concert scene, where the lights go out as the band plays, has had some influence on emerging generations desire for a sense of darkness in worship. Whatever the reason, people all across America are noticing this shift and turning down the lights in their services. (*Church* 136)

The usefulness of dark lighting was most likely rooted in the entertainment value of experiential environments. Kimball made a necessary and important connection to the band atmosphere seen

in many churches – modern and postmodern – today.

This was a difficult element of the emerging church to name as a phase of Baudrillard's four stages of simulation progression. It would have been an easy conclusion to say that dimmed house lighting and blaring, colorful stage lighting was a second-order counterfeiting of the band scene in American culture being brought to a primary place in emerging church culture. But, there was another reality at hand. Dim lighting in the house lights broadcasted intimate space without distraction. Dim lighting in large spaces was similar to the personal value that Christians put in finding a specific prayer closet to be intimate with God amiss a hectic society. Lighting in the emerging church certainly could have been either a simulation or a connection to an understood reality of intimacy. Certainly, those who used lighting as a copy of what they had seen to introduce intimate space in a large gathering without acknowledging the values of the changing culture were a part of second-order simulation producing an absence of reality.

Lastly, when the phenomenon of stage lighting had reached full simulation, those in charge acknowledge that there was nothing entertaining about the band playing yet dance lights around the stage like a concert. The denial of this obvious connection was an acknowledgement of non-contextualized reality. Baudrillard said, "It is useless to dream of revolution through content, useless to dream of a revelation through form, because the medium and the real are now in a single nebula whose truth is indecipherable" (*Simulacra* 83). According to Baudrillard it would have been impossible for Kimball to tell the audience (content) that the form was not for entertainment when it blatantly represented the same elements of a concert: stage, lighting, instruments, positioning on stage, etc. Baudrillard would undoubtedly have called this phenomenon a completed simulation based on an unrealistic assumption. It was impossible to separate the meaning from the medium because the medium is the message. In this context, the

darkened stage with representative lighting connecting the rock band atmosphere to intimate worship space was a counterfeited reality based on darkness communicating spirituality. The destruction of meaning happened when the communication of the environment did not match the purpose of the lighting. Lighting may not be a completed simulation, but in settings where it was used to aid the band playing a concert atmosphere was created. Again, this symbol was difficult to analyze with Baudrillard's theory because Kimball did not provide more background reasoning supporting the use of dark lighting. The only assertions were the success of what postmodern worship gatherers "liked." Finding more information about Kimball's intentions would have been essential to make a stronger argument supporting or deconstructing meaning in vintage faith worship gatherings. Perhaps this was where Baudrillard's theory ceased to be able to decipher meaning in this case. Analysis without intention produced no real profit here for the critic.

Symbols of the Faith

One common criticism of the seeker-sensitive church was the tendency of the church to ignore important symbols of the Christian faith by removing them from the church in order to avoid offending or distracting spiritual seekers. Kimball's focus group noticed this in the experiment too. They said, "Where were the crosses? It seemed more like a theatre than a church" (Kimball, *Church* 138). Semiotics like crosses, candles, and stained glass had been a large part of communicating the story of the Gospel throughout history. These three elements were especially crucial to vintage faith environments as well. The seeker-sensitive church sought to exclude blatant Christian symbols from their worship services, but the emerging church saw symbolism as an essential element in communicating spirituality to the participants.

*Crosses*

Kimball noted the irony of the cross in the emerging generation. He said, "So many newly built modern churches, in order to avoid appearing too church, have no crosses or other religious symbols. Ironically, people in emerging generations, even nonreligious people, often wear crosses, Egyptian ankhs, and other religious symbols. Our worship facilities should clearly communicate a sense of spirituality" (*Church* 138). Even though the cross was originally a symbol of torture in Christianity, it became a symbol of Christian affiliation. When Christianity was made the religion of the state by Constantine, the cross was given a new meaning in battle branding those believers as Jesus followers, even until death. As jewelry, people wore the symbol of death – in modern times – in leisure for aesthetic value or affiliation to Christianity. The meaning, though still similar had reached the final stage of simulated reality. It was not the intention of the user to claim death as their banner while wearing the symbol. Instead, it represented a new reality, no longer representational but simulated, of belonging and commitment to the spiritual cause.

The symbolic usage of the cross entered the world of simulated used well before vintage faith churches began to use it to symbolize a connection to an ancient faith. Integrating Baudrillard's ideas of simulation, when meaning became distorted the symbol no longer represented reality but created a new reality founded on something new. Constantine's foundation of the national Christian religion and secured crosses to the front of battle shields counterfeited the symbol of death and crated a new meaning of allegiance. The third-order and second stage of simulated representation happened when the cross entered the production stage and became a religious relic for sale. Lastly, the affiliation and belonging of wearing a cross to signify allegiance to a system without acceptance of spiritual death and resurrection in Jesus

signified the final stage of simulated meaning. From the early church until vintage faith church usage, the symbolic meaning of the cross changed considerably. Introducing elements like the cross were intended to signify a belonging to an ancient faith, but their inclusion in the worship gathering was a simulated relationship to affiliation not death – the original meaning of the cross.

*Candles*

Candles also shared a connection symbolically with death in the vintage faith church. Kimball said:

> We also use a lot of candles, not just because they are trendy but because they symbolize sobriety, spirituality, simplicity, quietude, and contemplation. It's not surprising that the set of a nationally televised fundraiser following the September 11th tragedy was barren except for celebrities and candles. Why? Because the mellow, flickering light of candles creates a mood that speaks of the serious, somber purpose of such an event. (*Church* 139)

Kimball was correct. Candles did communicate seriousness and reflection to postmodern people. Vintage Faith Church incorporated many candles in their worship gatherings. Figures 6 and 7 were corporate worship gatherings (Candle I, Candle II).

**Fig. 6 Candle I, Vintage faith Church, Santa Cruz, CA**

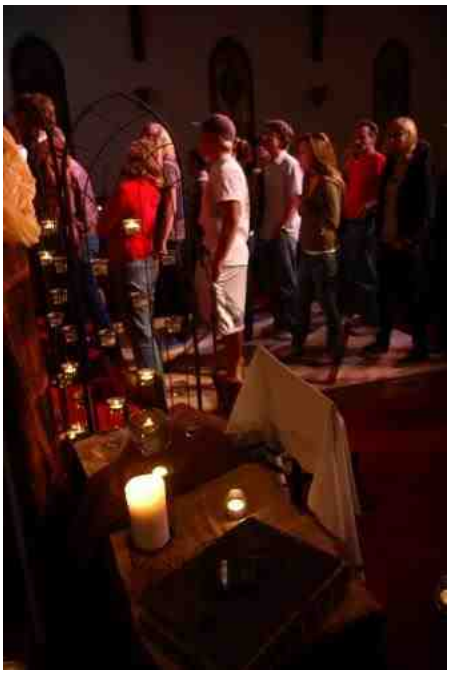

**Fig. 7 Candle II, Vintage faith Church, Santa Cruz, CA**

Figure 8 was a prayer station loaded with candles at Vintage Faith Church in Santa Cruz, CA (Candle III).

**Fig. 8 Candle III, Vintage faith Church, Santa Cruz, CA**

Candles also connected with the congregation on an emotional level. There was a moving scene that represents the emotional connection of candles to this generation at the end of the Warner Bros.' 2000 picture *Pay It Forward* where a candlelight vigil was set up outside of Trevor's home in memory and reflection of his life. The scene panned out and the amount of candles became more evident. It was a moving moment where teacher and mother were emotionally moved by simple flickering lights. In essence, the lights represented all those given life and light by Trevor's idea to change the world through simple and extraordinary acts of generosity. Although Trevor was gone, the amount of lights showed his continued life in each person he touched. As the camera continued to scan higher the lights of the candles faded into the lights of the city spreading in all directions like only light can.

Kimball noted the use of candles, in the early church, symbolically representing never ending light. He said, "When it was time to pray, [the early church] often would light a lamp to symbolize the light of Christ shining among them. When someone was baptized, they would be

given a candle or a lamp as they walked out of the water, symbolizing that they possessed the light of Christ" (*Church* 139). Candles were reflective, but also carried the meaning of death and vigilance.

This was also an interesting application of Baudrillard's simulation process. Kimball's entire intentions could not be ascertained from just this text. Candles may be used beyond the mellow contemplative feeling they elicit, but without more information about Kimball's intensions it was difficult to name phases in these elements of representation as simulation. Contemplative and somber feelings were still represented by the use of candles in vintage faith church worship gatherings. If these symbols began to represent an allegiance to a denomination or style of worship gathering meaning would morph from contemplation to affiliation and these candles would communicate an ur-reality similar to that of using crosses in gatherings. Baudrillard's simulation theory did not have a classification for projected simulation environments. Instead, the use of candles was a possible problem area for vintage faith gatherings if churches continue to reproduce similar environments.

*Stained Glass*

Lastly, stained glass reproduced on video screens has already been addressed as a falsified reality and introduced as an emerging church phenomenon. Baudrillard's theory of simulation maintains structural depth in analysis when applied to this element.

The stained glass on video screens was not stained glass at all, but a reflection of a time when illiterate people could not understand the Gospel and needed the story visually displayed. In the vintage faith church it had morphed into a counterfeited reality representing an aesthetic appeal and not what was originally intended. Kimball said, "Your building may not be a cathedral, but you can convey that sense of timeless beauty, order, and sacred space by finding

ways to use architectural or stained-glass images on your screens" (*Church* 140). In reality, how does a state-of-the art projection screen connect with a centuries-old stain glass replication or piece by Doré? The disconnection between what was and what now is not flooded simulation into the vintage faith worship gathering.

Stained glass originally provided a learning environment for people that are no longer present in the emerging church. The vintage faith worship gathering ushered in simulated stained glass to communicate mythical attachment to a generation of illiterate Christ followers who originally included stained glass to tell the story of Jesus. Conversely, the emerging church was operating in a hyper-educated environment of artistic and intelligent people. Counterfeiting stained glass murals on video screens polarized the need for such a phenomenon and invited symbolic misuse in meaning of this ancient element. The practice had morphed into a new visual display simply meaning "ancient." Meaning was mismanaged and a second-order counterfeit representation of aesthetic beauty replaced the visual display of the Gospel in vintage faith worship gatherings. The connection between ancient form and new aesthetic was what Baudrillard called a "denaturing of a profound reality" (*Simulacra* 6). The original purpose, denatured and reproduced in a new time deconstructed the old meaning disqualifying a pure representation. Stained glass on video screens produced counterfeited reality in the vintage faith worship gathering.

The Art Gallery

Another important part of the vintage faith worship gathering was the homegrown artistic community encouraged within each church. Arising from Kimball's personal experience, artists were held in high esteem in the vintage faith community. He said, "When I first entered the

evangelical world, I discovered that virtually every pastor I met was into sports… It seemed as though churches all across America had volleyball nights and softball leagues but gave little attention to artists. But then a fresh wind for artists began blowing in the church" (*Church* 147). Kimball's wind metaphor was referring to the resurgence of art in the vintage faith worship gathering. The influence of artists on the community emphasized that the aesthetic influence cannot be diminished. Kimball's love for artists had created a new norm. Paintings were displayed during the sermon, music was written by those in the church fellowship, and small environments filled with worship symbolism and décor lined the exterior of the sanctuary inviting multi-sensory people to enjoy the presence of God in the sanctuary through visual and emotional rhetoric.

Karen Ward at the Church of the Apostles in Seattle incorporated worshippers' poetry reading in the worship gathering; figure 9 showed examples of this type of multi-sensory worship experience (Poetry Reading).

**Fig. 9 Poetry Reading, Church of the Apostles, Seattle, WA**

Kimball noted that God values creativity and the vintage faith church started to reclaim the aesthetic in church because they desired to represent God better. "Our values in culture are now shifting, allowing the arts back into the church" (Kimball, *Church* 147). More artists were attending vintage style worship gatherings because they were tailored to the aesthetic and multi-sensory nature of artistic, creative people. The logical conclusion of this metaphor shift was that

Kimball traded the current modern church metaphor communicating a sports stadium for the postmodern art gallery metaphor. This shift, altered to reflect the change in culture, radically changed the visual meaning of the vintage faith type church.

The overuse, according to Kimball, of sports in church had alienated the artist. The church operated as a stadium with the sports star in the arena being cheered on by admirers. This created a jock/geek simulation in modern churches. The pastor was held in greatest esteem as the best "spiritual athlete." His – or her – actions in the modern church were celebrated as a pseudo-gospel to the Gospel of Jesus. The pastor had reached the level of celebrity with onlookers as audience members on the sidelines of life cheered their favorite star to victory and begged them to teach them to do the same. The power of the sports metaphor in the modern church and how it communicated a mismanaged meaning of leadership had significantly rooted itself in the culture of the seeker-sensitive church. Similar reactions resulted from the congregation and audience when their athlete fell from perfect graces. The sports' world treated and disqualified athletes who used performance-enhancing drugs and illegal substance. The church reacted to members of clergy that were found to use sin as a reprieve from the pressures of performance. Celebrity leadership created an atmosphere of singular control and perfection in the modern seeker-sensitive church.

It was a mentality of the gifted being honored over the ungifted. The skilled were given privilege and the unskilled were treated as an embarrassment. This is a drastic conclusion to the overindulgence of sport in churches today, but logical when the mentality of competition takes center-stage in the church sanctuary. Kimball said of a friend's experience that summarizes the postmodern mindset of mistrusting the pastor as "celebrity athlete:"

> A friend of mine recently changed churches, leaving a great Bible-based fellowship with terrific teaching to attend a service that focused more on liturgy. When I asked him why he changed, he told me he realized he wanted a church that revolved around the Scriptures themselves, not the personality of the preacher. His new church has a pastor, but the focal point of the service is the reading of Scripture (lots of it). He said he wasn't distracted by the preacher or tempted to become addicted to his charisma as a substitute for the Scriptures themselves.
>
> Although I would not consider my friend's opinion a good one for everybody, I wonder if his comments don't reflect some insight on how to reach post-Christians. (*Church* 190-1)

Kimball suggested a reestablishment of leadership for participation in the vintage faith church and contextualized it to the artist in worship gatherings. Particularly in this situation he suggested corporate reading of Scripture and allowed others in the church fellowship to read publically.

Kimball ushered in a new metaphor – the art gallery – in his form of vintage faith worship gatherings. In a culture run by the art gallery, all were encouraged to submit their ideas and conclusions, as long as they were valuable. Equal participation in the sermon using art as contextual support to the words was essential. In this version, everyone participated, everyone who was artistic preached, and everyone who was involved saw multiple views of the same lesson. The simulated culture of the sports world bleeding into the modern church was exchanged in the vintage faith church for the love of a beautiful artistic culture. The vintage church's use of art was beneficial, but needed to be balanced and not obsessive in order to

include all postmodern people. Not all postmodern thinkers connected with artistic flare. Many were not overtly visual. A new simulation developed when the artist became the lone participant in vintage worship gatherings. The simulated art gallery became a posh refuge for the visually oppressed creating a new simulated reality unintended by Kimball and fellow emerging leaders.

Churches like Mosaic | 5619 found ways to participate in the ancient traditions of the church without making them appear corporate or coercive. Fellow church members serve peers the element of communion at a service geared around the artwork displays in the back of the picture. In figure 10 worshippers served others as they mingled throughout an art gallery listening to music. This is a fluid, communal leadership Eucharist ceremony metaphorically representing an art gallery environment (Communion).

**Fig. 10 Communion, Mosaic | 5619, Austin, TX**

In the art gallery metaphor, a simulated mismanagement of meaning was imposed from the seeker-sensitive church substituting the art gallery for the sports stadium. Kimball's

suggestions for leadership shift and visual changes integrated the same metaphor simulation isolating certain types of people and not accepting all people. The difficulty with this symbol is the elusiveness of Baudrillard's terms. Ultimately, both metaphors communicated an unstated intension using elements that were familiar to participants in other contexts. The mismanagement of symbolic imagery of the pastor and visual environment communicated metaphors in the seeker-sensitive and vintage faith churches that taught participants how to act because they had been exposed to similar circumstances. This was a completed simulation. The developed symbol represented the original more without the same nature. Baudrillard noted that simulation radically negates the sign as value and established a utopian on the principle of equivalence – although nonequivalence was true (*Simulacra* 6). The metaphor took on new and unintended meaning when the vintage faith church refocused its audience on artists instead of athletes. Simulation was not negated but reestablished for a new culture.

## Concluding Analysis

In this section many signs were discussed that represented the destructive powers of simulation in vintage faith worship gatherings. Simulated elements were chosen to address the resourcefulness of Baudrillard's theory and the benefit of the established methodology. After analyzing *the band*, *technology*, *video screen broadcasts*, *life-stage groups*, *ancient structures*, *light*, *symbols of the faith*, and *artistic displays* the conclusion of simulated power in the vintage faith worship gathering had became apparent. The following chapter will synthesize the conclusions and findings of this study and will suggest possible extensions from this study to connect to future scholarship.

# Chapter 5 – Conclusions of Analysis and Honest Contextualization

## A Free Disney Vacation

Last year my mom was given the privilege of teaching an accounting seminar at a Disneyworld resort. Through work she was afforded a hotel room, airline flight, and a wonderful vacation at one of America's greatest resorts and experiences. Disney is a master at selling the experience by selling an entire fantasy world. Their employees are actors on the stage where each visitor experiences being royalty. The employees wear magical costumes and create a world of fantasy the moment you drive through the Disney welcome gates.

I decided to join my parents on their fantasy vacation experience for the first half of Spring Break. Although this meant that I had to forfeit a relaxing trip with my best college friends to a serene lake house last remodeled circa 1973, I was assured that Disney would be unforgettable. The most unforgettable moment happened while riding Tomorrowland® Transit Authority with visions of what Baudrillard must have seen at Disneyland before he published his famous Disneyland application as the great American simulation ruminating in my mind making sense of the seductive symbolism employed at every turn. The ride slowly revolved around Tomorrowland® allowing the rider to see the space from above. As the ride rounded one corner a small-scale model of a city was visible and the audio message on the ride began to explain Walt Disney's dream of creating an earthly utopia. Fortunately, this idea never fully gained enough momentum to come true. At that moment Baudrillard's words and the seductive polarization of simulation hit me full force. Baudrillard said that Disneyland was, "…digest of the American way of life, panegyric of American values, idealized transposition of a contradictory reality. Certainly. But this masks something else and this "ideological" blanket

functions as a cover for a *simulation of the third order*" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 12). Disneyland, or in my case its sister Disneyworld, communicates a contradictory reality. It's the reality of force. It's the force of fantasy. It's the fantasy becoming reality. It's the princess and the prince masking the visitor. It's the escape of today into the utopian of tomorrow. I was riding around above Disney's realized utopian based on fantasy listening to how he had failed to create a realized utopia beyond the small-scale in front of me. It was ironic that he simulated in Tomorrowland® what he had wished to create, yet he thought that he never accomplished his dream. When the visitor enters Disneyworld the magic begins and reality is translated into fantasy. This epiphany summarizes the dualistic nature of this project.

Baudrillard's theory of simulation served as a workable methodology to analyze Kimball's emerging church vintage faith worship gatherings, but there were precautions of extreme analysis that were taken and should be noted in the future. While in the middle of analyzing reality I became incredibly aware that I had named everything simulation according to Baudrillard's theory. If it was all simulation then what value was it to reality? The theory had taken us too far without a viable solution to counteract simulation.

The first research question asked in this project was, "Is it possible to apply the theory of simulation to the vintage faith worship context?" The simple answer is "yes." But, this is a question deeper than a one-time study of postmodern application to a postmodern phenomenon. Beneficial analysis *was* made in the analytical section to suggest that using critics outside the Christian tradition to analyze phenomenon within should be encouraged. Baudrillard had specific theoretical tools built into the text that were able to function as an applicable rhetorical structure to pull meaning from a text. There was great benefit to using Baudrillard's postmodern critique. But, a certain caution should also be asserted here. Simulation was a profitable theory

to pull meaning, or the decay of meaning – destructive meaning – from the vintage faith phenomenon. However, not all of Baudrillard's conclusions were seen in this project.

Baudrillard does not suggest how to avoid simulation in works that have already been simulated. In fact, the spiral of simulation ultimately denatures all meaning from a text without the possibility of reclaiming important value from a destructive system of signs. The conclusions of this project are different. Unlike Baudrillard, I believe that an avoidance of simulation is possible within an intentionally postmodern phenomenon gaining fame in a simulation-rich twenty-first century America. The avoidance of simulation comes from an honest context of symbolic usage, which Kimball refers to in his text.

If analysis using Baudrillard is taken to the extreme, the critic may find themselves labeling everything simulation and leaving nothing to representation. If all things are simulated then there was originally nothing represented and nothing able to be denatured. The spiral would implode on all things and destroy meaning in all contexts. Because this conclusion is inevitably impossible, there must be a way to avoid simulated semiotics. Baudrillard does not mention it in his theory of simulation, but studying Kimball's vintage faith worship gatherings through the lens of simulation revealed possible adaptations of Baudrillard's theory. Kimball's eight symbols of vintage faith worship gatherings – *the band*, *technology*, *video screen broadcasts*, *life-stage groups*, *ancient structures*, *light*, *symbols of the faith*, and *artistic displays* – helped to develop an alternative use of meaning. When Kimball suggested using ancient symbols in current time, the way he avoided simulated representation was through contextualization of the old signs in a new reality. Grassroots creativity is not the only way to achieve perfected meaning in a group. Honest contextualization refocuses the meaning of the sign making it applicable to a new audience without denying the obvious ramifications and connections that the sign has to the

past. This is not a mismanagement of meaning but a foundational step in creating new contextual meaning.

Discussion Between Theorists

Meanings were hijacked and communicated differently than what Kimball had intended. The simple conclusion to the previous chapter's analysis was that simulation had a firm root in the elements Kimball highlighted as vintage faith worship elements. However, Kimball also had suggestions that avoided the process of simulation like moving the band to the back of the auditorium and creating music and artwork from the audience members instead of duplicating songs from other people. The power of creativity was apparent in the vintage faith church and Kimball himself seems to be dialoguing with similar symbolic tension in his recent publications since *The Emerging Church* was published. Kimball said in his blog entry entitled "Enter Hope" from March 24, 2008:

> We had the video overflow happening in the coffee house during the gatherings. We have been doing that for a while in the evening gathering due to lack of space but haven't had the need in the morning, but did because of Easter. I am so torn about video venues and overflow. I can understand overlfow [sic] like we do when you run out of seats - so it is an overflow. But launching video venues off-site is a diffent [sic] thing and I am always thinking of how they shape one's ecclesiology. The medium does (in my opinion) make a difference in the message. But that is a whole other discussion and I am tired right now and may try to sleep. (Kimball, *Vintage*)

Kimball appeared to be very aware of the ongoing dialogue of meaning including a reference to

McLuhan's teachings.

Using Baudrillard's theory to illuminate meaning from Kimball's vintage faith worship gatherings proved to be a workable methodology, but like all dialogues both participants reserved the right to stand on their own opinions. Kimball gave ways to avoid simulation and Baudrillard claimed that all simulation results in a destruction of meaning. Baudrillard said, "All Western faith and good faith became engaged in this wager on representation: that a sign could refer to the depth of meaning, that a sign could be exchanged for meaning and that something could guarantee this exchange – God of course" (*Simulacra* 5). Baudrillard doubted the significance of the sign actually representing what it intended. The only conclusion available for the signifier then was for it to be its own signified. If Baudrillard was completely accurate then no signs would be able to signify the original without distortion of meaning.

Kimball did not specifically address this point, but he would have disagreed with Baudrillard's conclusion. Baudrillard continued, "But what if God himself can be simulated, that is to say can be reduced to the signs that constitute faith? Then the whole system becomes weightless, it is no longer itself anything but a gigantic simulacrum – not unreal, but a simulacrum, that is to say never exchanged for the real, but exchanged for itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference" (*Simulacra* 6). This was where the opinions of Baudrillard and Kimball diverted. Kimball accepted the divine as fundamental to the preservation of signified reality. Baudrillard denied God has a possible being and concluded that He was a signified reality incapable of being outside the framework of signified bound to creation of humans through signs. The polarization of this belief represented why Kimball concludes that signs are useful and crucial in church and Baudrillard denied the profitability of the signified and claimed an extreme deconstruction of symbolic meaning.

Even though these scholars differed in the use and understanding of symbolism, Baudrillard's theory was worthy to devise meaning from a complicated postmodern text with some reservations and hesitations. It was impossible to separate the message from the medium. The nebula of meaning and form was integrated so tightly that a neat division was impossible. Baudrillard's destructive conclusions of a spiraling simulation seemed to damn vintage faith worship gatherings at many points. There were serious implications and warnings for those participating in these practices. The main task of applying Baudrillardian analysis to religious rhetoric was successful with some reservations. Other conclusions are also in order to completely assess the outcomes and potential of this study.

## Kimball's Contextual Protection

With the subheading "Vintage worship is going back to the original and keeping that in mind," Kimball expressed one of the best concerns of writing a text like this that gave ideas for new and innovative worship. Kimball said, "I wonder if in the rush of creative planning and the desire to see people enjoy our worship gatherings in the modern church, we have pushed to the sidelines what we are supposed to be doing" (*Church* 114). The purpose of the vintage faith worship experience was to reach the postmodern generation with a creative flow that they enjoyed because it was contextual to their likings. Throughout the text, Kimball urged readers to not adopt principles of vintage faith without understanding where the ideas have came from. Copying current trends led to a dangerous simulated reality.

The second research question in this study asked, "Does the application of simulation to vintage faith worship elements explain changes in meaning through symbolic simulation?" The answer here is also yes. The application of Baudrillard to Kimball helped to pull meaning from

the text and analyze it for future use. Using these two critics aided the bulk of material being written specifically for the emerging church. The elements of the vintage faith church have obviously fallen into mismanagement of meaning, and Baudrillard's theory of simulation showed how to decipher meaning from the text according to the four-stage typology of signs.

Kimball expressed great concern protecting against pirating worship tricks without substance. This concern should be great comfort to the Baudrillardian critic, because duplicating without foundational and contextual background led to simulated reality leaving a denatured reality for a preferred reorientation and misrepresentation of the real. Mark Oestreicher said in the margins of *The Emerging Church*, "I firmly believe that creativity does not mean making up everything form scratch; modifying and borrowing are keys to creativity. But if our frenzy for change is consumed with merely pawing for the next worship trick, we're really missing the point" (Kimball, *Church* 112). This quote was key in seeing how to avoid simulated environments. This comment also opened my mind to see the difference between my original conclusion and the final conclusion of this project.

I had originally believed that grass-roots creativity was the only way to create a worship gathering without dishonest connections that fragmented current reality with bits and pieces of an unrealized past. Oestreicher explained the benefit of borrowing in creative process assuring the reader that it is okay to duplicate what Kimball says as long as it is for a contextualized purpose – a reason or cause, not manufactured tricks that work. I named this process "honest contextualization." If something is borrowed from the past, admitting that it is from the past and being used in the present for a specific purpose averts simulation. Honest contextualization also admits that something is new when it is new. Borrowing ancient practices and moving them into the present releases an aura of authenticity that cannot be duplicated by a completely grass-roots

creative worship experience. Borrowing older practices without an honest contextualization denatures and destroys the context of the sign hijacking meaning and creating a falsified reality – simulation. Honest contextualization is expressed throughout Kimball's text although never named as such.

One example of this is Kimball's distaste for a Mexican worship gathering he attended while on mission to the country. According to him, it was not very effective because he became incredibly bored with the way worship was being communicated with no vintage elements involved. He eventually realized that he was not the one to design a worship setting for these people in a small Mexican city of two hundred people. Their pastors had designed a worship gathering with the context of the people they were trying to reach (Kimball, *Church* 120). Kimball had done the same thing with his congregation in Southern California, but he included vintage elements. He continued to reiterate the point of contextualizing worship gatherings for the type of person the church is aiming to reach throughput later portions of the text.

Kimball also taught that emerging churches were not chain churches reproduced according to a financial bottom line. This point was already discussed earlier, but served as another reiteration of enriched symbolic honest contextualization. He continued to explain that aesthetics and environment were important in emerging churches and needed to scream out who the church was the moment people walked in the door (*Church* 141). The emerging church is not a McDonald's chain church with similar characteristics and structure in each building. Instead, each church should produce and mold the worship environment to be more like who they are (Kimball, *Church* 142). Using personal elements, church individuals became honest with how they were using symbols of ancient and current to communicate important truths to worshippers. Honest contextualization has the potential to produce a relational connection with

worshippers that one-way video screens and stagnant environments cannot. Unfortunately, Kimball does not practice complete honest contextualization, and vintage faith worship settings are filled with elements of simulation.

Another way vintage faith churches attempted to give context to symbolic imagery and signified reality was through music. Kimball encouraged worship leaders to use songs created by the people in their church. This point was based on the assumption that creative people were creating in the congregation. Kimball said that churches may have great worship songs in their midst and were unaware of what was around them (*Church* 158). Homegrown, or grassroots, music cannot help but be honest contextually. Instead of a band reproducing what other musicians were trying to say in a different context and a different time, homegrown musicians were communicating to the context they knew and understood. The disconnect between the cover band and the original band reintroduced reality. Kimball contextually protected his ideology of vintage faith worship environments by being honest with the context of worship elements. He slipped into a dangerous simulation when honest context was disregarded for ancient aesthetic and connection.

Warren also pointed out the inconsistency of ancient worship followers using buildings like St. Elizabeths and The Lafayette Grand. Warren said:

> Unfortunately, many who want to return to the "ancient faith" don't want to go back far enough. They only want to go back to the architecture and rituals of the Dark Ages, when the church was the most ingrown and least missional. My prayer is that we'll go all the way back to the New Testament, where they used homes, not Wal-marts or Cathedrals. *That* is vintage faith! (Kimball, *Church* 134)

Calling beautiful architecture ancient is not incorrect. Beautiful architecture may be new, old, or ancient. But, calling it an original depiction of New Testament reality is a dishonest statement about symbolic context. Ancient structures must be contextually framed in order to avoid simulation.

McLaren defended a similar argument when he talked about media's influence as virtual reality. McLaren said that the more time spent in virtual reality should create a greater sense of honest actual reality:

> It's ironic, and importantly so, that as we spend more and more time in virtual reality, we take "actual reality" more (not less) seriously. We care more and more about aesthetics, color, feel, ambience, quality, history, uniqueness in our physical surroundings. I think that the more time we spend in virtual reality – online, in theaters, watching screens of all sorts, even having our heads in books (which are just a lower-tech form of virtual reality, aren't they?) – the more time we need to decompress, defragment, and debug as human beings with bodies, senses, in space and time – in real places, places with a feel, with gravity, with actual atmosphere. Of course, God's creation is the ultimate arena of "real reality," but our churches should be wonderful sanctuaries within and in harmony with God's creation. (Kimball, *Church* 135)

Taking "actual reality" more seriously included harmonizing churches with God's creation. An honest rendition of creation in our churches was not linking the postmodern back to a time when the church had the most power and money but back to its ancient roots in New Testament house church teachings. This was honest contextualization and a protection against simulated reality.

This simple conclusion to this elongated analytical process and a plethora of simulation

suggestions led to more research and future change in church worship gatherings. Without connecting this research to why it mattered, this study would become a simulated hope of possible communication scholarship. Instead, this work should encourage other communication and rhetorical scholars to take non-traditional approaches to studying Christian and evangelical communication artifacts. When a postmodern approach to Christianity emerged, non-Christian postmodern scholars – like Baudrillard – should be searched to see what kind of truth could be brought into Christian scholarship. New and pioneering studies should be encouraged in subsequent approaches to Christianity as well. In the next generations, more approaches will be created to reach new types of people. At that time, this study may serve as an example of how to defend and conduct a new conversation between theorist and artifact. However, in all scholarship there are pitfalls that demand caution. Baudrillardian analysis cannot be conducted without concerns. This project has specifically pointed out certain things to question in Baudrillard's theory like the unavoidable destruction of simulation.

## Unavoidable Deconstruction

As already mentioned, Baudrillard's work did not specifically address how simulated reality can be avoided. Instead, he named American culture and experience an unavoidable destruction spiraling into nothingness – a catastrophic implosion of meaning. Baudrillard said:

> Nevertheless, maybe a mental catastrophe, a mental implosion and involution without precedent lies in wait for a system of this kind, whose visible signs would be those of this strange obesity, or the incredible coexistence of the most bizarre theories and practices, which correspond to the improbable coalition of luxury, heaven, and money, to the improbable luxurious materialization of life and to

undiscoverable contradictions. (*Simulacra* 14)

From this text the scholar can see that Baudrillard saw an absolute end of implosion at the conclusion of simulated reality. A system, referred here to the kind seen in America, was set to implode into a materialization of misguided reality and a complete destruction of actual reality. According to Baudrillard, the inevitable conclusion to this phenomenon was consequently extreme demise. But, is symbolic Armageddon really on the horizon of America's future? Or, is there a chance that Baudrillard's analysis takes simulation to an extreme? I believe that critics must be careful in applying Baudrillard because the future does not look as bleak as he tends to make it as exemplified in Kimball's suggestions of honest contextualization.

The foundation of honest contextualization in this study answered major questions addressed in the beginning of the study. The reality of vintage worship already operating as a simulated reality may be saved and refocused as a creative symbolic endeavor if Kimball and other leaders will recontextualize each ancient symbol they bring back into the vintage church. Church praxiology now and in the future should keep the same conclusion in mind. Subsequent progressive generations should keep in mind the importance of symbolic meaning. We are symbolic using and abusing creatures that manipulate and translate and irritate and commemorate using symbols. Future generations should note the progression Kimball took towards creating a simulated reality without contextualizing symbols. They should avoid doing the same thing in the next generation. The tendency and normalcy may become vintage faith worship gatherings in all kinds of churches. When the new symbols become the norm new reality is established and linked to a previous reality. Honest contextualization of duplicated vintage faith symbolism is critical in communicating proper meaning to future generations. Similar precautions should be heeded.

This study proved that using non-religious theory – and even anti-God theorists – could be a tremendous aid in studying religious rhetoric. Baudrillard's theory sketched meaning from Kimball's text that was previously hidden. Without his theoretical input, this study would have little significance in the religious world. This is a pioneering study and certainly not a perfected model. Future rhetoricians may use the critic of the individual and modeling of a workable theory to aid them in forming better rhetorical "odd couples." Ultimately, this research aided the evangelical world by starting to sketch what had not previously been understood.

## Future Research

This study, applying Baudrillard to vintage faith worship contexts, is a basic survey study of the artifact and theory interwoven to produce truth about representation and simulation. Future research could be conducted to extend any specific argument that was made deeper into the various levels of simulated reality. For instance, I only briefly discussed duplicating sermons on video screens and projecting them into other rooms. Kimball had reservations about practicing this in his later writings. This point could be taken deeper and be developed better as a main assertion of all mega-church growth today. This phenomenon is not limited to the emerging church but is also very prevalent in modern and seeker-sensitive churches. This study limited my ability to address other dimensions of the phenomenon because of the limited scope of reference. Future study would be beneficial in discovering the nuances and intricacies of specific worship elements across church affiliations.

Baudrillard should also be studied in future projects where Christians have used signs to depict something they did not originally mean – keeping the development of honest contextualization in mind. The cross and the nativity are two examples of signs that now take on

different meanings than they had originally been created to do. Crosses signify spirituality when they originally started as a torture tool. The nativity was a sign of humility that has now become a sign of affiliation and aesthetic. Future Baudrillardian critics may desire to take specific signs or movements within Christianity and apply simulated sign progression to the history and current use of these signs. Baudrillard has valuable insight into the destructive nature of signs that traditional theorists like Pearce and Cronen, Bormann, and Fisher do not address. Baudrillard's critique is a valuable tool to discover meaning in other symbolic phenomenon, although more traditional approaches of constructing theory have gained more attention in the communication field.

Lastly, future research may be done using this study as a primary example of how to introduce scholars with different worldviews and philosophic values to Christian scholarship. If the Christian critic is willing to put in the work of assessing and digging through the author's text for truth, as was done here with Baudrillard, the application of truth does not hinder the production of quality Christian scholarship. It is my fear that the body of Christian scholars continues to be exclusive in its approach to studying phenomenon with typical forms. Instead, other scholars have valuable and workable ideologies that should be used to discover meaning in new contexts. Progressives in evangelical scholarship should take a frontline stance on current cultural issues. Perhaps at that point scholars will be participating in the phenomenon of holistic living and reclaiming secular space like the emerging church strives to do.

Ultimately, this study has attempted to establish a working methodology of Baudrillard's simulation. The process of introducing new phenomenon, suggesting possible simulation avenues for analysis, a new conception of integration in different levels of simulated reality, and a thorough critique of suggested simulation avenues was tried and found effective in finding

simulated meaning in complicated phenomenon like vintage faith worship environments. This contribution to scholarly work should be analyzed and developed within the frame of other analytical projects. This method may be a foundational method for future Baudrillardian research.

Escaping from Seahaven

"It's a really neat Wal-mart because it doesn't look like a Wal-mart at all," I heard my future mother-in-law say. She was excited because the new Wal-mart Supercenter she found had a non-traditional but familiar façade on the front of the building. The store was made to look like an older main street grouping of storefronts. One end looked like a general store and the other end had a hard wood awning like a blacksmith barn. These visual changes represent a "down home" experience, but Wal-mart is an international company structured to spread and maintain personal values and practices. The visual values and the internal workings are different. Simulation. As the front of Wal-mart looks more like a main street lineup of stores, it becomes a destructive simulation connected to a falsified reality of "down home" feel.

The majority of this chapter was written in a new coffee shop visually decorated with rust. Rust signifies something old and decayed. The Good Cherry – the shop's name – was celebrating its one-month anniversary. Decorating the main counter with rust was an intentional decision by the owner to signify values the company possesses. They promote folklore and ancient tradition. They communicate a grassroots coffee brewing and roasting style that fights against corporate perception that defines coffee shops like Starbucks, Seattle's Best, and Caribou Coffee. Decorating with rust communicates what is not true – a simulated masterpiece used for visual stimulation not a progressive oxidation of aged metal.

Silk plants, *Into the Wild*, *Cool Memories* journals, constructed parks, indoor fitness centers, video broadcasted sermons, celebrity image in politics, Wal-mart Supercenters, The Good Cherry, and Vintage Faith Church worship gatherings are all prevalent examples of visual simulation in American culture. According to Baudrillard there is no escape. We're inevitably spiraling out of control into a falsified reality based on… nothing. In this study, I've found that honest contextualization protects against visual elements of simulation. Like a rescue raft in the middle of a simulated ocean, this study creates a space to observe the difficulties of simulation application to American religious culture. Like Truman Burbank finally leaving Seahaven in *The Truman Show*, the chance to live free by braving the raging ocean instead of staying in a tidy, little, made up world of simulated reality is here. We can reclaim it. The onus is on the signifier to honestly communicate visual contexts. Without it we live inevitably controlled lives under the influence of simulated reality in a faked culture. Freedom in context.

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