

Review

Spiritual manifestation of light in architectural scenes of films: A case study of Bergman's winter light

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Natural light is the one which originates from the sun and the stars. Philosophers and intellectuals believe that spiritual and mystical light, apart from having a materialistic aspect due to its nonphysical characteristics, is considered a kind of bond between God and man in a spiritual dimension. With descriptive-analytical and comparative methodology, the present paper reviews the implication of natural light in the architectural spaces of film such as Bergman's winter light. Winter light, influenced by western religious and human thought, is a story of a priest who after the death of his beloved wife becomes skeptical in his spiritual belief, but he is bound to invite others toward true faith due to his occupational compulsion. However, since his own faith is weak, his speech lacks the real effects. The focus of the study's discussion here is the use of natural light as virgin and spiritual in implicating the architectural surrounding of the above-mentioned film and that in these spaces, man is shown with invisible symbols and diverse phenomena including spiritual light.

Key words: Natural light, spiritual implication, architecture, cinema, winter light.

INTRODUCTION

Philosophers and intellectuals, throughout the centuries, have interpreted light as a materialistic and spiritual essence that originated from the sun, moon and stars. Light is the source of the whole existence. Once light encounters with the surface of things, it gives them shape and casting shadow at the back of the element provides its depth. The light is a key to understanding space, which has direct influence on its quality. Architecture is manifested through the light. Despite the fact that the light is an immaterialist element, it is able to manifest and give identity to a material like architecture. The light is considered as one of the important elements in giving semantics outlook to liturgical space (Ardalan, 2001). Both architecture and cinema are art that focus on creating living spirit and space and in the process of understanding space, each of these two arts is bound to a common principle. Both arts enjoy from spatial and temporal elements and are considered indebted to visual and imaginative elements (Benjamin, 2000). Architectural

materials are usually real and bodily, whereas cinematic materials are superficial and imaginary (Thomas, 2002). The only aspect of architectural elements that has non-material and metaphysical essence is the light. The lighting is considered to be the most important element in bringing identicalness to spaces. While discussing cinema, Peter Heisenberg indicated five levels, one of which is background. According to him, the background includes places like synagogue, church, monastery, abbey, clergy's chamber and mosque. Firstly, he opines that this part has much similarity with religious film and secondly, the places are all together liturgical and religious architectural accomplishment (Sasani, 2001).

The present study focuses on the role of light in giving spiritual outlook to the spaces of a film such as 'winter light', which has been compiled in two sections. The first section deals with the definition of both light and liturgical space and their relations with architecture and cinema, while the second section analyzes the lighting space of the proposed film.

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NATURAL LIGHT

Natural light is the one acquired from rays of sun, moon

and stars and the source of all is the sun. Although, the light is part of human daily life, in reality, it originates from the atmosphere. Almost all the light that is utilized on earth travels as an invisible energy in space before it reaches the earth (Oshidari, 2000). Light is the form of energy, all of which (that is utilized on earth) originates from the sun. In other words, sun has a number of secrets that has made human beings to be astonished throughout the ages (Sohrevari, 1999).

SPIRITUAL LIGHT

Philosophers and intellectuals throughout the centuries interpreted light as a materialistic and spiritual essence that originated from the sun, moon and stars. Arthur Zajonc in his book "Catching the Light" writes: "To see a thing, the eyes need more than the natural light and that are esoteric and visual senses (Zajonc, 1993)". Empedocles, a Greek philosopher, has also pointed to it. If humans ignore the light being life-giving wisdom that illuminates all its senses and flows, then the splendor of human existence will become silent and mute against it inquiring spirits (Basao, 2006).

SPIRITUAL SPACE

Prayer during antiquity meant complete devotion to God. Consequently, it is mentioned in the Old Testament: "Now O my son Suleiman! Try that you acknowledge the God of your ancestors, worship and give service to Him, with your entire endeavor. God is near to all hearts and thought. If you are in search of Him, you will find Him, but if you turn down from Him, you will be ostracized forever" (Ashrafi, 2005).

Prayer means fulfillment of God's commands that accompany His symbols. In response to a question; which of the religious doctrines are the most important? Jesus Christ said: "God who is your friend, try and keep Him friend-heartily and sincerely. This is the foremost and the most important command of God. The second doctrine is similar to the first one that is friendly to your neighbors with the same intensity that you love God. All commands of God and His prophets are summarized in these two doctrines and if you accomplish them, in reality, you have accomplished all of the commands" (Butterworth, 1982).

Since the domain of worship in Islam includes all human acts; hence, intentions, saying and characters inclined to God, are worship. Thus, it can be concluded that the domain of worship in Islam is belief and the life of human being, which covers the whole human existence. With respect to the above definition, prayer means devotion and bondage to God. Worshipping place is known differently in different faiths. Spiritual space is the one where faithful mobilizes his whole existence for nearness

to God. This is a place where soul is free and man is needful of the space where he could share his feeling with almighty. Form and shape of this space, at all, has no importance and what attracts most is the spatial spirituality where a faithful exists.

LIGHT AND ARCHITECTURE

Light is key in understanding space that directly influence the quality of spatial understanding (Yerfin, 2005). "Light is the source of the whole existence". Once light encounters with the surface of things, it gives them the shape and filling shadow and at the back of the element, its depth is given. Light is the creator of the connection that settles the world. Despite being the source of the whole existence, usually, it is not a constant source. Light, contrarily, has vibrating movement with its continuous changes and recoups the consistent world (Ando, 2004).

With respect to this fact, these hints could help in studying the relationships of an architectural remain with the light. As Tadao Ando believes, "light does not illuminate alone, there must be darkness to make the light lit and illuminates with glory and magnificence. It is this darkness that makes the radiance and magnificence of the light visible (Sheldon, 1987). The darkness fundamentally, is a part of light. Today, since every thing is homogenous in light, architect believes in creating a two-dimensional relationship between light and darkness. The beauty of light is like the gem in the darkness that humans take into their hands. The light, splitting the darkness and penetrating into the human body, makes life possible. By this way, an architect must begin the construction of a building in that its deliberation and strength of spirit could make humans free in their daily life. In other words, the light makes an architecture aware of life and makes it powerful" (Ando, 1991).

Le Corbusier believes that architecture is an artistic game and a dazzling collection of constructed substances under the light. The human eyes have been created to see these forms under the light. These are the manifestation of shade and light that make the forms barefooted in front of humans. Cubical, conical, cylindrical, spherical and pyramidal are the foremost forms that are presented by the light. Their images are pure, delicate and explicit (Courbusier, 2005).

LIGHT AND CINEMA

Valuable application of lighting is to show the period throughout 24 h. With the selection of a suitable angle for prevailing, paramount lights (that are artificial) and natural light resources (in the interior and exterior spaces) can, in all circumstances, induct down and dusk or at other times in days and night (Morris, 1979). Light has a very important and effective role in cinema. For example, in

expressionism cinema, sky has been shaped on the basis of light and its aesthetic application. On the other side, black cinema, based on the light, has embarked on an internal definition, invisible characters and work contents. An outstanding manifestation of light is *Citizen Kane* by Orson Wells in which Kane, in the height of definition, has acquired distinct and valuable symbols. In this film, despite being black and white, he even describes a number of definitions through the light, though light has been transformed as an effective language.

LIGHT IN CHRISTIANITY

In the initial year of Christianity, light played the intermediary role of God and the world or itself was a symbol of God's existence. Jesus Christ, after his revival said: "He is the light of the world". In that manner, an apparent manifestation of light was transformed into a spiritual phenomenon. Christ, the messenger of love, occasionally in the holy Bible says that the light is definite (Bonkor, 2005).

In Christianity, light is the simile of God and this interpretation too has been transformed in the course of time. For Christians, the symbol of light is the reality that has been revealed by Jesus Christ. This light illuminated prior to the brightest start, in the night of Christmas. This light guided three Magians to a stable that was full of divine light. This issue was a big lesson to humanity such that they look at the top, elevate their knowledge, travel as faithfuls, never become suspicious and believe that they accept this light. If anxious, this light would illuminate together (Frank, 1962).

Jesus is the symbol of divine light and has taught man that they are also from the same light. Jesus showed the power of light to everybody and wherever he went, the light illuminated from him. The light of Jesus is the light that enlightens every human being and Christians know that this light must be followed. Christians believe that whosoever possesses the light of Jesus, no matter at what stage, an exalted and eternal life is opened for him (Lieberman, 1991). They believe that the path of survival is always open. Symbol of this light is eternal and when a link is established, joy, happiness and love that are implication of light overflow the soul.

Throughout history, in every religion and belief, a place has been designed to offer spiritual obligation; hence, a believer could establish a link with the Almighty in desirable circumstances. Since the church is a holy space for Christians, the actual plot for 'winter light' has been filmed in a medieval church.

Film winter light

'Winter light', directed by Ingmar Bergman, is a story of a

pastor named Tomas Ericsson who wants to hold a service for people in a small church during a cold winter day, but his faith is replaced with doubt after the death of his wife and hence, suffers from apathy and anger. Despite this, being in the church profession, he is bound to establish links with others and invite them towards God. Bergman, with critical insight, attempts to highlight the weakness and laziness of modern men in religious inclination. The scene of the film is formed in 8 actual sequences. What attracts the viewers more is the natural lighting in most of the scenes (Figure 1).

As such, the lighting in the first scene of the film is such that the faint-colored images symbolize the weak presence of Christ and God in these sequences. In the middle sequences, when the cross sculpture is shown, a deep image along the sculpture is illustrated, which is an indication of the pastor's nearness to Christ. In other words, Christ puts His shadow on him. However, the sequence returns to the first position (Marina, 1924).

All human beings are in need of a calm and quiet period so that they could experience unity with God. The offshoots of creativeness must be hidden in the place before they are exposed. Grains are sown in order for them to grow, while the fresh buds must relieve the darkness in order to reach the light. Stagnation and fetidness are the result of remaining in darkness for a longer period of time (Basao, 2006). In this film, the pastor has reached a stage of stagnation due to the negative feeling that has penetrated him. Hence, for his work space, he has selected a room which has a small window and as a result, little light enters into the surrounding. This texture is the same as "soul of the dark night" by Saint John. If human beings head off to the condition where they lack security and spiritual shocks, in reality, they live in darkness (Harvey, 1986).

Hauck believes that an insight to the past often engulfs a person to darkness. With this situation, concentrating light on the past could change the understanding when compared to that of Hauck (Hauck, 1992). This definition explains the condition of the pastor who, due to recollection of amatory life with his wife and lack of the same at present, has questioned the existence of God in a way that he has engulfed into the darkness.

In the initial sequences with internal and external spaces of the church, people who are in the search of love and affection, are all seen in the dim light. Although, the film was made in Sweden where dusk is seen earlier in cold winter season than the other normal days of the year, all incidences in the film take place in the day time and no sign of night exists there; except the time when Algot, a sexton of the second church, while talking to Tomas, tells him about the scene of the 'last supper' of Jesus Christ.

In the initial sequence, it is 12 o'clock. In other words, the film opens with the noon service at the end of November. In such a plot, the lifeless grey light tinkling in dessert and the chilly air which blows eastward on the

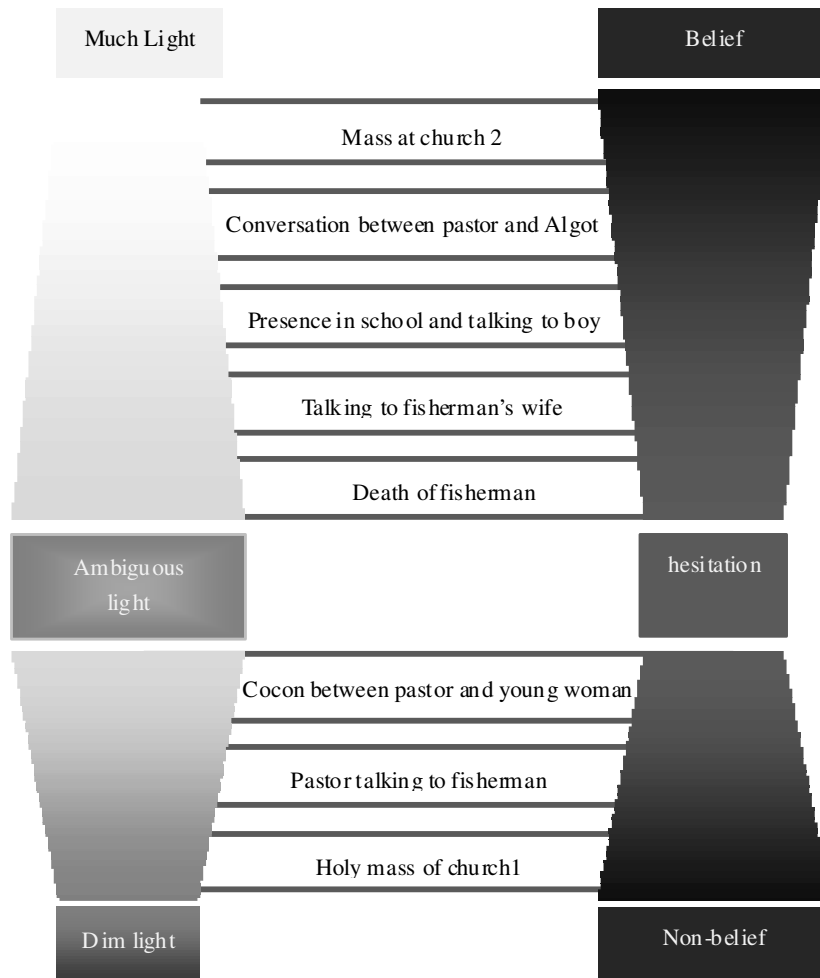


Figure 1. Representation of light and shade in the winter light.



Image 1. Outer view of the church.

river along the church, according to Christian belief, symbolizes the passing of the soul of Jesus towards the water. Moreover, it is directed in a way that it passes along instead of passing over the church (Image 1). In this scene, a medieval church that is situated on a mound between the two neighborhoods of Hill and Joptun is shown. The chilly and cold sphere is where fresh snowing, but continuous light, has started for weeks and in which ice has covered the grey colored road and plantation. Church, seminary, house and pastor's room as holy scenes of the film have been shown in the initial sequences and these have very effective roles at the end with the creation of a warm atmosphere.

The film opens and ends with the sacred mass; however, the only difference between the two sequences is the types of beliefs of people who are present at the church. With regard to this difference too, the lighting in the two sequences are different. The first scene begins with the ceremony, thereby showing indifference, lack of emotion and anxiety on the face of participants. In the initial scenes of the film, at the time of the mass, faces

are listless and soulless and all in small groups are praying facing the altar.

After the service, the pastor tries to heal a fisherman, Jonas Persson, who has been suffering from anxiety due to mental and spiritual pressures. The pastor continuously talks about the kinds of his links with God, but his speech has no influence and cannot convince him. The request of Jonas' wife to Tomas for giving relief and spiritual solace to her husband has been described beautifully. The light effect of shadow that perpetually employs close-up aspect in the entire film of Bergman, intensifies a kind of boundary between faith and doubt that has its roots in human apprehensions. When Tomas suddenly asks Jonas that he must have faith in God, there emerges a doubt in his own faith. However, when he had an eye encounter with the man, he puts his head down out of modesty. The pastor's pain is the silence of God. At that moment, the silence of God is manifested on Tomas in that it forms a visual aspect that has been highlighted by big particles of sweat on his face and his leaning over the fence of the altar as well as his intense coughing. In this sequence, to the end of his conversation, Tomas' black shadow is on Jonas and that is an indication of the effect of his negative conversation on Jonas. In this scene, the face of Tomas was dimmer, although his surrounding was completely bright. Despite the fact that Tomas believes in the silence of God, the director through light motif describes the point that God is omnipresent. Moreover, these are human beings who are unable to understand Him. When Jonas is ought to leave the chamber of Tomas, his face that was semi-dark and semi-bright becomes completely dark. Following that, this light is a manifestation of the dead end of Tomas. An intense light suddenly shines from the window and the face of Tomas too becomes pale. The end of the conversation and the reverse effects of the pastor's speech led to the suicide of Jonas as his mental pressures reached the highest level and other light of faith have become dormant inside his body. When darkness is employed to show feelings and negative conditions, it is equipped with panic, succumbing to illness, exasperated or hopelessness (Redeclyffe, 1987). Tomas and Jonas are two characters of the film who have entrusted themselves to these feelings and especially in the scene where Jonas and the pastor are talking to each other. This is the scene that has a kind of panic and hopelessness that has been manifested through the lighting effect.

A woman schoolteacher, unfaithful but a lover of Tomas, is an element for which the pastor could distinguish his negative conditions as challenges and opportunities for spiritual growth. In the beginning of the film, though the pastor tried not to accept this change, after the death of the fisherman, these experiences gradually became effective. Tomas and Marta each have accepted a personification aspect from the Christianity as their faith and have become vacant from other aspects. Marta's personification is the compassion of Christ and his illness is the symbol of Christ's suffering. Although



Image 2. The point of God.

devoid of faith, her face is bright in most of the scenes. Contrarily, Tomas with lateral faith is inclined to perform religious rites but lacks sentiment.

After the end of the conversation between Tomas and Jonas, Marta enters into the church. The pastor, who during his conversation has accepted the sphere, encounters with a type of metamorphosis and describes "he has this transient hope that everything transforms". This scene that is considered the brightest one from the point of view of natural light, has very dazzling rays that are penetrating through a window to the church and flashing the face of both Marta and the pastor. This light means that God wanted to show His presence to the pastor, but again, due to the suicide news of Jonas, the pastor gets muddled (Image 2).

Fading away of faith and lack of affection caused the faces of both Marta and Tomas to remain almost dim at the time Marta reaches to describe her affection to Tomas and delivers the basket of food to him; but in the second scene when Marta comes to the church, the situation is vice-versa. Further, in the scene, when Tomas accompanies Marta to the school and was busy talking to her, the class is full of light penetrating through the big window. Marta tells Tomas that his face is like a white spot and in reality, he is not what he looks like. This sentence has vague meaning. On one side, the implication of the fading color is the outcome of fear that has surrounded Tomas after the death of the fisherman. On the other, based on religious definition, it could manifest an internal change in Tomas who has reached from the stage of uncertainty to conviction, but since he is still attached to his first wife, he does not want to adjust Marta in his mind and make her unhappy with the same reason. Marta uses such sentences to Tomas based on the fact that she understood this situation. The classroom as one of the sacred places in the film is much brighter. Arrangement of the classroom is also like the church with



Image 3. The bright face of Marta.

piano, chairs and tables; hence, the class structure is like a church. Although, Bergman like Filini believes that if Christianity will be the path of humanity's salvation today, definitely, the shape of the church is not the same. This aspect is repeated in Tomas encountering a kid who is a pupil of Marta and does not want to become a pastor like his brother.

In this film, snow as a symbol of light is very deep and effective. The light illuminating from the snow is much brighter and spiritual. The suicide scene of Jonas near the river (being bright with a laudable sound of water), sketches the presence of nature and symbolizes the feeling of freedom. In this way, the fisherman (close to water and snow) has reached the stage of calmness and has retrogressed to nature.

When Tomas enters the house of the fisherman to deliver the news of his death, the wife of Jonas who is pregnant rests on the staircase after hearing the news of her husband's death. Her deep shadow is shown on the wall. It symbolizes though, from now onward, that his shadow will be on the whole family. Subsequently, this is the time, that in an open and common scene, Tomas as a pastor has dim shadow.

After the woman and the pastor had finished squabbling in the school and giving the news of the death of Jonas to his wife, the two enter into the second church. In this sequence, the pastor comes out and proclaims that there existed God and Christ and the silence of God has been purported from his own point of view. Algot, whose shadow seems to be very deep in this scene says: "Hell is the same godless paradise and godlessness is the output of weakness in friendship and weakness in returning to one self. Algot, after reading holy verses from

the Bible has reached the conclusion that the grief of Christ was not due to His physical suffering, rather it was because of the fact that He had encountered, with deep doubt, before his death and has thought that He has come across with the silence of God. This is the same imagination that the pastor encounters while talking to Jonas. Tomas discovered that the grief of Christ is on the cross and experiences the fear from freedom through God and Christ. Algot, instead teaches to Tomas that the doubt is a human phenomenon and one must not be hopeless. This manifestation of Christ at the time of doubt would be the source of his insight. Retelling such a situation, brings the pastor towards himself and in this scene, the face of the pastor becomes more sparkling. In the last sequence of the film, when the pastor is transformed, after listing Algot, his face is flushing with beautiful light. At that time, the face of the woman is in the dark. He murmurs to himself: "Alas! We could have the faith from this frivolous". With the beginning of service and lighting of candles, the face of the pastor is visible and then the camera turns toward the woman who is the only worshipper in the church, hence, her face becomes flushing too (Image 3).

The prayer of the woman is accepted and God manifested Himself to her. In this part of the film, the whole sculpture is illuminated as though the light has covered the whole cathedral.

At the end of the film, the beleaguered pastor at the crossroad of faith and doubt holds a sacred service. It is the end of the silence of God, despite the inefficiency of the church, the technological onslaught and grief of illness, the shining rays of compassion and humanity and the faces and architectural domain illuminated more with

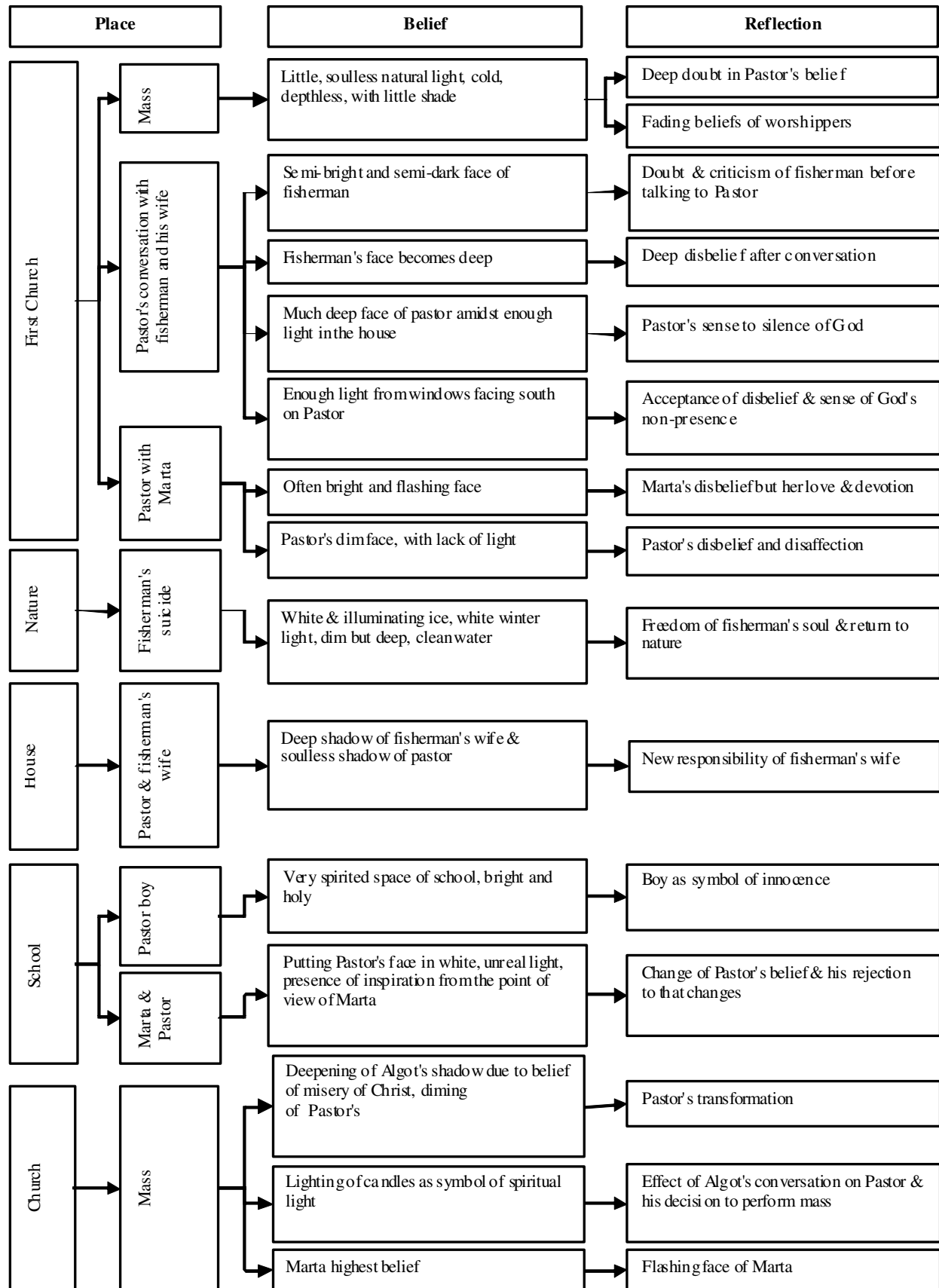


Figure 2. Analytical study of the scenes of winter light.

flushing light. The scene is an expression of the idea of Hauck "the feeling of darkness and negative experiences can be compared to a big mirror that should teach people to have truthful and creative view. Lighting of candles and coming out of the darkness, in reality, is to lay a step to day light that gives an insight to performances, thought and feeling (Hauck, 1992). As a result, a decision is taken to execute the church ceremony and candles are lit, which is an indication of putting steps to the light of the day. This is the light which is different and spiritual and in reality, is the light of God.

With emphasis on natural light, Bergman proceeds to a kind of false resemblance in the architectural space of the film so that he could get access to the spiritual light.

Conclusion

Transformation of people and protagonists in spiritual and material definitions acquires uniform definition of light in his film. In reality, Bergman considers man, space and light as fundamentals of spiritual and semantic life. Since light is considered as inseparable from religion, it has found special place among architectural and cinematic arts. From the discussion of this film, it is accrued that with the decline of spiritual light in architectural space, man has encountered (with a number of problems such as hopelessness in life, war and riots) suicide and astray. Contrarily, the presence of light is accompanied with faith, hope, spirituality and life (Figure 2).

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