

# **Outwards the Invisible**

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**Reading Calvinistic churches in sixteenth  
and seventeenth centuries**



**POLITECNICO DI MILANO**  
**I FACOLTA DI ARCHITETTURA**  
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## Introduction

The ideas in mind bring the ideas in hand. It is particularly true for the practices of religious architecture. Every act of worship must have a setting.<sup>1</sup> The diverse architectural settings of worship reflect diverse ideologies, worldviews, religious practices, and aesthetics. Thus, church architecture is first and foremost a matter of ideas rather than a matter of style. It silently proclaims messages that either defend or conflict with its religious beliefs. Nonetheless, it is evident that even derived from a unique idea, the buildings vary from one and another. The diverse historical contexts of local society, politics, and economics explain the diversity of architectural results in spite of the identicalness of their conviction. A radical transformation of the church architecture occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as a result of new ideas about theology, ecclesiology, and liturgy which promoted the pluralization of church architecture.<sup>2</sup> Calvinism or the Reformed tradition, one branch of

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<sup>1</sup> Allan Doig, *Liturgy and Architecture from the Early Church to the Middle Ages* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008), xxvi.

<sup>2</sup> Donald Bruggink and Carl Droppers, *Christ and Architecture Building Presbyterian / Reformed Churches* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1965), 2.

Evangelicalism, is one of the most radically distinctive examples. This latest idea, led by John Calvin and other Reformation-era theologians, sprang from the city of Geneva, spread over the Continent, crossed the channel to the British Isles and then traveled with the *Mayflower* to the “New World”. What impact did Calvinism have upon the places of worship? What ideas were concealed behind the Calvinistic church buildings? What were the historical causes of the various architectural results derived from one identical conviction? We will attempt to find the answers of these questions in this paper.

The paper is divided into three chapters in which three spatial and architectural characteristics of the Calvinistic churches are to be examined: Spatial Dynamics, Central Focus, and Aesthetics. Each chapter has two main parts. The first part discusses briefly discussion the particular characteristics of Calvinistic ideology by analyzing the corresponding points. In order to understand Calvinistic architecture, we must first understand the Calvinistic mindset. The means by which we are able to ascertain the Reformers’ mind is through their words. Thus, several of Calvin’s own writings and other Reformed theological documents have been selected to support the

investigation of the principles of their religion. The second part provides case studies chosen from the typical Calvinistic churches from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, some of which have long disappeared and left few sketchy records in the history. For these particular ancient buildings, digital modelling technics has been used to reconstruct and visualize the reality as recorded. A comparison of the cases from different historical contexts has been given to conclude the general impact the diverse social, political, and economical contexts had on the architectural results.

In the first chapter, the spatial dynamics, two points are discussed: the philosophy of space, and the dynamism of the space. In this chapter we will discuss about the so-called “receptacle” theory of the space, and we will see Calvin’s criticism on this theory, and his own point of view about space, which is associated with his ontology of the church. The space inside church building was regarded by Calvin not sacred *per se*, but was neutral and homogenous. This idea fundamentally de-sacralized the religious buildings, brought a homogenous space into the church buildings where the ritual was conducted as a dialogue between the Divine and worshipping

congregation. The case study on this point therefore will look at St. Pierre Cathedral in the city of Geneva. It was the starting point of Calvinistic movement where John Calvin's own ministry was conducted.

In the second chapter, we will discuss about the central focus in the Calvinistic ritual. The "receptacle" theory of space further impacts also on the liturgy. We will discuss briefly on the controversy of the sacrament, leading to conclude that the Calvinistic liturgy is a liturgy of words. The preaching replaces the celebration of Eucharist become the center of the worship every week. The pulpit therefore becomes the liturgical focus in Calvinistic churches. In a dialogical ritual, the worshippers as one of the two parties in the dialogue were not passive audiences, but active and attentive responders of the preaching. The attentiveness of the congregation during long sermons requires congregational seating.<sup>3</sup> We examine the central focus in two French Calvinistic buildings: the Temple of Paradis in Lyon, and the temple of Charenton. Neither of them exists anymore; digital

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<sup>3</sup> Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space: An Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 118.

models from very sketchy materials are completed to visualize these two ancient structures.

In the third chapter, *The Aesthetics*, we will talk about Calvin's aesthetics in the framework of his epistemology, or precisely his doctrine of knowledge of God. Again, his constant emphasis on the transcendence of God will also determine his aesthetics. We will talk about the symbolic meaning of light and colors in relation with Calvin's aesthetics. Yet, practically, the bright interior is helpful for bible-reading and visual communication between the ministers and congregations during the service. Two cases from Dutch Reformed churches are selected to examine these aesthetic aspects.

In the end, a summary comparison of the cases is provided to explain the diverse contexts of society, politics, and economics in different cases and their impact on the architectural results.



## Chapter One: Spatial Dynamics

Considering religious architecture, some terms emerge in one's mind, such as "spirituality", "sacred places", "holy lands", *et cetera*. The basic idea that lies behind these terms is that the divine presence is confined within a particular range of space. The relative distance between oneself and such space with the presence of the divine would imbue the individual with power. The closer one could approach, the stronger and more auspicious the connection is. Not surprisingly, access to the space nearest the divine manifestation was restricted to only few individuals who had been properly trained in the practices required of in such a holy place.<sup>4</sup> This belief is consonant with a so-called "receptacle" theory of space, which means that "space is either in or about something or something is known to be in space".<sup>5</sup> In such understanding, space is heterogeneous in which some parts are holier than the other. Entering to a holy space, then, is regarded as a spiritual or sanctifying process within which

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Richard Joby, *Calvinism and the Arts: A Re-assessment* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2007), 123.

one is accessing closer to the divine presence, obtaining stronger power, and receiving greater prosperousness. Contrasting to this idea, Calvinism holds a remarkably different perspective of the space in relation to God, which derives from Calvin's emphasis on the transcendence of God and his otology of church.

## **De-sacralization and Homogeneity**

In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin wrote about his understanding of worshipping space in relation to the transcendence of God. He recounted a story of Xerxes as told by Cicero. Xerxes burnt and pulled down all the temples of Greece, because he thought that the gods, who ought to be free and open, were enclosed by walls and roofs.<sup>6</sup> Calvin argued that the God of Christians has indeed the ability to descend and be near to his people, "and yet neither change his place nor affect us by earthly means".<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that in Calvin's understanding God does not limit his freedom in relation to space. For Calvin, God is not contained within space. He is

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<sup>6</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV:i:5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

transcendent over the space.

In regard to the Temple of Solomon in the Old Testament, Calvin



Fig. 1 Title page of Calvin's Institutes published in 1559.

argued that “even the temple was not represented to the Jews as confining the presence of God within its walls, but was meant to train them to contemplate the image of the true temple. Accordingly, a severe rebuke is administered both by Isaiah and Stephen, to those who thought that God could in any way dwell in temples made with hands (Isa. 66:2; Acts 7:48).<sup>8</sup> In another place, he mentioned again, “the temple is not only styled his face, but also, for the purpose of

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., III:xx:30.

removing all superstition, is termed his footstool (Psalm132:7; 99:5).”<sup>9</sup>

For Calvin, worshipping places, neither the Temple of Solomon nor the contemporary church buildings were the spatial dwellings of God. The transcendent God does not rest physically or spatially in the manmade structures, but dwell spiritually in the communion of the elect. “We are the true temples of God”, Calvin affirmed. The faithful are called “to consecrate themselves as the temples of God”, in them “God dwells by His Spirit”.<sup>10</sup> Calvin considered “church” as the totality of the elect. Or we can use another theological term “invisible church”. In the 1536 edition of his *Institutes*, Calvin used the term “church” almost exclusively as the “invisible church”.<sup>11</sup> However, by 1559, he had devoted nineteen chapters of Book IV of *Institutes* to the “visible church”. Nevertheless, the visible churches still consist of people, not of structures. For Calvin, the difference between the invisible and the visible churches is that whereas the former contains merely the elect,

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., IV:i:5.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Spicer, *Calvinist Churches in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 6.

<sup>11</sup> Joby, *Calvinism and the Arts*, 144.

the latter includes both the elect and the reprobate. So the term “church”, in Calvin’s understanding, regardless of the difference of invisible and visible, ontologically means a group of people. Consequently, Calvin regarded the church architecture as *adiaphora*, which is an issue not fundamental to Calvinistic belief and practice and therefore a matter of indifference. The worship space is neutral and homogeneous, because the ontological substance of “church” in Calvin’s view is a body of people rather than a physical structure.<sup>12</sup> The other Reformed communities, such as the Scottish and the Dutch Reformed Church, were in line with this view. When the synods gathered and discussed about building “churches”, they were not referring to the erection of new buildings but to the establishment of Reformed congregations.<sup>13</sup> If individuals alone are living temples of the Holy Spirit, no building structure should be regarded as a sacred place. To put it simply, Calvinists desacralized the church architecture. This helps us understand why some Calvinistic churches were also given over to other civic use. For instance, in Scotland, a few years after the seizure by the Calvinists led by John Knox, some parts of the

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<sup>12</sup> Spicer, *Calvinist Churches in Early Modern Europe*, 7.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

St. Giles' Cathedral were given over for the General Assembly and a police office.<sup>14</sup>

We should notice that it was profoundly countercultural in the late medieval world to claim that the church buildings were in fact not holy *per se*. Because it had been a very common belief in the ancient world to consider the temples, sanctuaries, or other kinds of worship places holier or more proximate to the divine than other places.<sup>15</sup> To stress this Reformed point of view on the worship spaces, Calvin wrote,

*“We must beware... of imagining that churches are the proper dwellings of God, where he is more ready to listen to us, or of attaching to them some kind of secret sanctity, which makes prayer there more holy. For seeing we are the true temples of God, we must pray... without distinction of place, [but] ‘in spirit and in truth’ (John 4:23)”*<sup>16</sup>

So in this view, the believers cannot go to the church, because they

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<sup>14</sup> Joby, *Calvinism and the Arts*, 128.

<sup>15</sup> Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space*, 14.

<sup>16</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III:xx:30.

themselves are the church, they themselves form the church. So “church may exist without any apparent form”. The marks by which church is ascertained are not the “external splendor”, but the

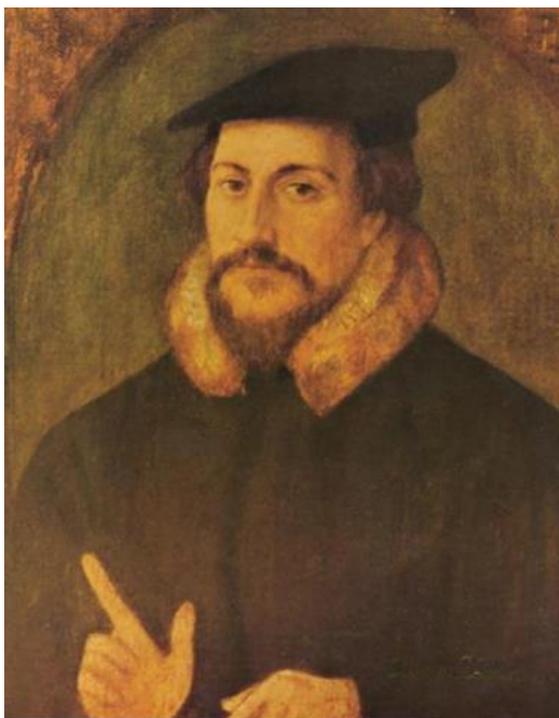


Fig. 2 Portrait of John Calvin, by Hans Holbein the Younger, 1497-1543.

“preaching of the word and the observance of the sacraments”.<sup>17</sup>

In Calvinistic’s explanation, the church is not confined by the spatiality, for “Wherever we see the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there we cannot have any doubt that the Church of God has some existence”<sup>18</sup> , nor by

temporality, for “When [ever] the preaching of the gospel is reverently

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., Preface.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., IV:i:9.

heard, and the sacraments are not neglected, there for the time the face of the Church appears without deception or ambiguity”.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, this innovative understanding of the worship space as a homogeneous space which is not holy and sacred in it determines the role of church building that is to facilitate the preaching and administration of the sacraments which are the essential elements and marks of the Calvinistic liturgy.

## **Dialogical dynamism**

Calvinistic liturgy is a liturgy of word, not just reading, but above all, preaching. Preaching is the prominent element in the Calvinistic service.<sup>20</sup> Throughout the long sermon, the congregation sits and listens to the preaching. It appears more static rather than kinetic. However, the dynamism in Calvinistic service is verbal. To be more precise, it is a dialogical dynamism. In Calvinism’s understanding, the service of public worship is essentially “a meeting of the triune God

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., IV:i:10.

<sup>20</sup> Regarding to the central focus of preaching and dialogical features of the Calvinistic liturgy, see chapter two.

with his chosen people”.<sup>21</sup> God is present in the service; most importantly God is present to speak in the preached words and in the sacraments. As the Second Helvetic Confession says, “The preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God”,<sup>22</sup> Calvin believes that God truly through preaching speaks. So the Calvinistic worship is dialogical, wherein intelligible words of God are articulated by the preachers on behalf of the divine, to whom the congregation is to respond. The whole service is all in vernacular, so that it could be totally understood by all to be responded. The congregational response is mostly in mind and heart to comprehend the preached words, but also audible through prayer, singing, and praise. The preacher and congregation are ideally positioned near to one another, so that the sermons can be heard. The size of the buildings is as important as its configuration in facilitating the preaching. The preacher faces the congregation whenever leading the service, for the preaching is towards the congregation, and visualizing the concept of

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<sup>21</sup> THE DIRECTORY FOR THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD, chap. I, C.1, *The Book of Church Order of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, 128.

<sup>22</sup> *Second Helvetic Confession*, chap. I.

a dialogue which explicitly differs from the synagogue liturgy.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Some may relate the Calvinistic liturgy with the synagogue liturgy for both of them hold a high view of the words. However, there is an explicit difference between them. In Calvinistic service, the core is the preaching of the words, yet in synagogue is more about reciting and reading. See <http://www.jewfaq.org/liturgy.htm>

## Case study: Calvin and St. Pierre Cathedral, Geneva

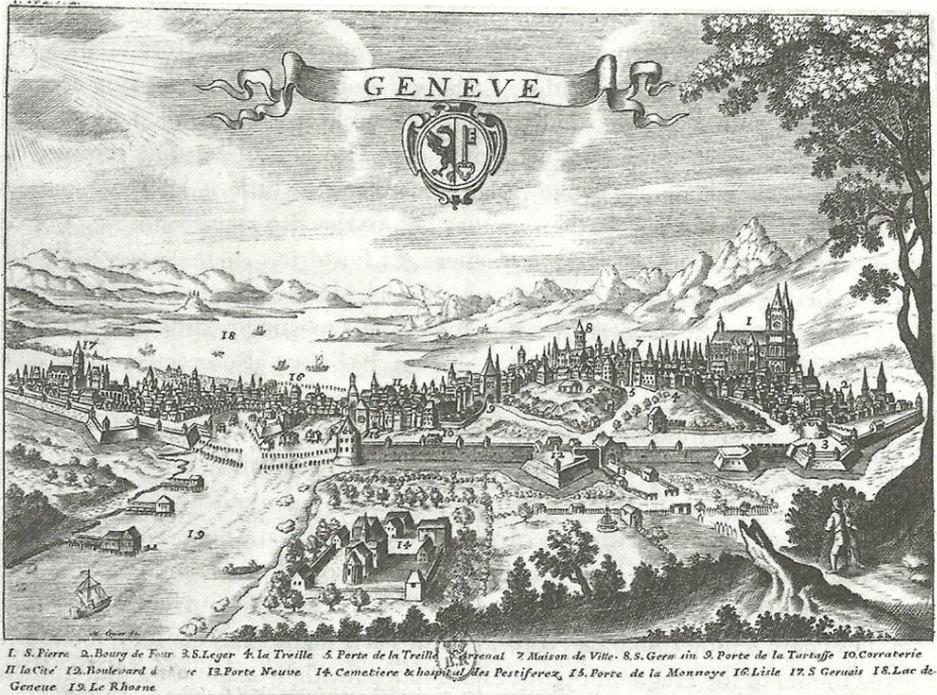


Fig. 3 A view of the city of Geneva.

We begin our journey from John Calvin and the St. Pierre Cathedral in the city of Geneva where Calvin ministered. Calvin was born in Noyon, France in 1509. He completed his education in law at the prominent universities of Orleans and Bourges. He then continued his law studies in Paris, where his conversion to Protestantism took place in

the early 1530's.<sup>24</sup> As a result, Calvin had to leave France. He spent some time travelling around but in 1535, he eventually found rest in Basel where he met Martin Bucer, a Reformer from Strasburg. In the spring of 1536, he published his *Institutes of Christian Religion* when he was 26 years old. At that time, his intention was to spend the rest of his life peacefully as a scholar and writer in either Basel or Strasburg. Geneva was never part of his life plan. On his way to Strasburg, due to the war between Charles V and Frances I, Calvin was forced to go through Geneva. His initial expectation was to stay for only one night. Yet strong words from a French Reformer in Geneva, William Farel stopped him. However, two years later, Calvin and Farel were both expelled by the Council of Geneva for the issue of exercising discipline and excommunication. Calvin went to Strasburg to preach in a French refugee congregation by the invitation of Martin Bucer and Wolfgang Capito. The life and work in Strasburg was pleasant for him. He preached, taught theology, revised the worship order, wrote, and got married. However, this happiness ended in 1541. Geneva, without any progress in the organization of the church and

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<sup>24</sup> Jack L. Arnold, "John Calvin: From Birth to Strassburg (1509-1541)," *IIM Magazine Online* 1, no. 7 (April 12, 1999).

public morality, called Farel and Calvin to return. Farel refused. However, Calvin, convinced that it was the will of God, left Strasbourg with tears in his eyes and returned to Geneva. There he was to live the rest of his life and to stamp the city for all time with his name.

Geneva had freed itself from its overlords before Calvin's arrival.<sup>25</sup> With the help and influence of Bern, it succeeded in maintaining its independence and adopting the Reformation. Before Calvin arrived in Geneva in July 1536, the General Council of the Genevan people had voted unanimously to "live henceforth according to the Law of the Gospel and the Word of God, and to abolish all Papal abuses, images and idols".<sup>26</sup> The iconoclasm had largely been completed.

Calvin did not build new churches in Geneva; rather he altered the interior arrangements of existing church buildings.<sup>27</sup> It reflects his

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<sup>25</sup> For several centuries Geneva had been ruled by its bishops and by the house of Savoy.

However, under the insuppressible desire for self-government, three councils gradually grew into power, and showed a strong hostility to the house of Savoy. Eventually, with the military help from other cantons, Geneva declared itself free from the bishop and duke of Savoy in the early 1530s.

<sup>26</sup> E. William Monter, *Calvin's Geneva* (New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc, 1967), 56.

<sup>27</sup> Catharine Randall, *Building Codes: The Aesthetics of Calvinism in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 31.

spiritual interpretation of the term “church” as a body of people. For him, there was no need of new buildings since three of the medieval parish churches buildings provided sufficient accommodation (Fig.3). One of these re-ordered buildings was St. Pierre Cathedral where Calvin himself preached. The alterations were not as radical as many other places which adopted Calvinistic practices. Again, what Calvin and other Reformers were concerned about was not constructing a physical structure but establishing a congregation.

Let us take a look at what happened in St. Pierre Cathedral. According to the record from the *Société d’Histoire et Archéologie di Genève* (Fig.4),<sup>28</sup> a sketch model is made to illustrate the interior of St. Pierre Cathedral before the Reformation.

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<sup>28</sup> *Memoires et Documents de La Société d’Histoire et d’Archéologie Di Genève*, vol. IV (Geneva, 1845).

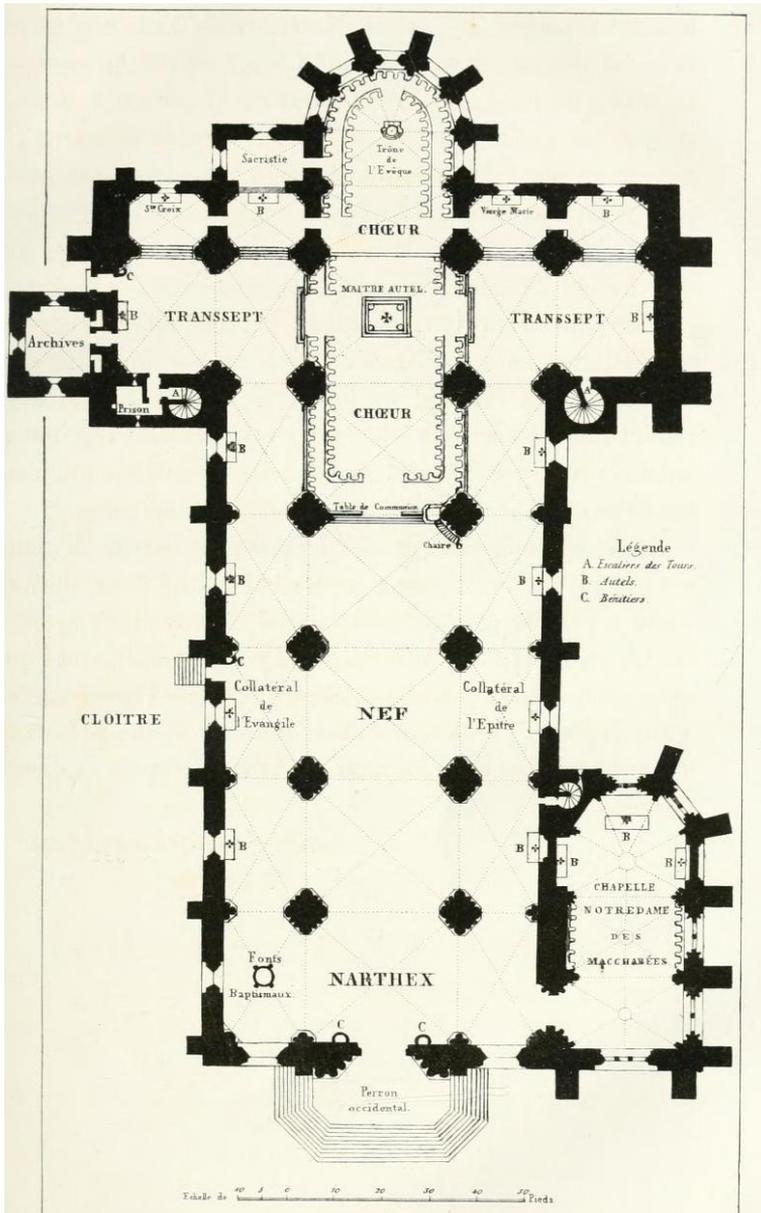


Fig. 4 Plan of St. Pierre Cathedral, before the Reformation. Source from *Memoires et Documents de La Société d'Histoire et d'Archéologie Di Genève*, Vol. IV, 1845.

Before the Reformation, the pulpit stood by the second pillar on the right in the nave looking eastwards. It was on the same level as the rood screen separating the priests from the lay congregation (Fig.12, 13). The priests met in the choir which goes around the high altar in the center and to the east end where the bishop's throne stands (Fig.15). The celebration of the Eucharist was offered inside the choir, around the high altar and was separated from the laity by the rood screen, for it was believed that this specific spot inside of this building was the space where God was held to be present (Fig.14).<sup>29</sup> The laity, therefore were only able to watch the ceremony from distance. In this "receptacle" understanding of space, the worship space is heterogeneous. Whereas the entire building was regarded as sacred, the space inside the building was still not homogeneous, for there was a specific spot which was believed to be even more sacred than the others.

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<sup>29</sup> André Biéler, *Architecture in Worship: The Christian Place of Worship*, trans. Odette Elliott (London: The Westminster Press, 1965), 58.



Fig. 5 View from West side, St. Pierre Cathedral, by Robert Gardelle, 1750.

The same cathedral transformed after the occupation of Calvinism. There was no radical change on the exterior façade. It was not Calvin's interest to create any form of stylistic alienation (Fig.5). So when John Evelyn visited the city in 1646, it is of no surprise that he described St. Pierre Cathedral as "a spacious Gothic fabric", and "very decent within".<sup>30</sup> The differences were to do with the interior space. The spatial arrangement of the early Reformers was not only very different from the previous setting, also unlike the arrangement of today. With the help of early Registers of the Council from the State Archives of Geneva in 1541, we are able to find the original alteration

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<sup>30</sup> John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. William Bray, vol. 1 (New York: M. Walter Dunne Publisher, 1901), 238.

in Calvin's age (Fig.8, 9). After the occupancy of Calvinism, the pulpit was kept and deliberately moved to the first pillar on the left,<sup>31</sup> so that it would be in the center of the congregation who sat convergently in the apse, the transept and at the front of the nave. The rood screen and the choir which signified the separation of clergy and the laity were both demolished. The space was no longer considered as a heterogeneous object, but neutral in their substance and homogeneous and continuous. The pulpit was more prominent in this arrangement, but surely it was not regarded as holy place at all. Benches for men, women, and children were installed and faced towards and around the pulpit (Fig.18, 19).

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<sup>31</sup> Biéler, *Architecture in Worship: The Christian Place of Worship*, 57-60.

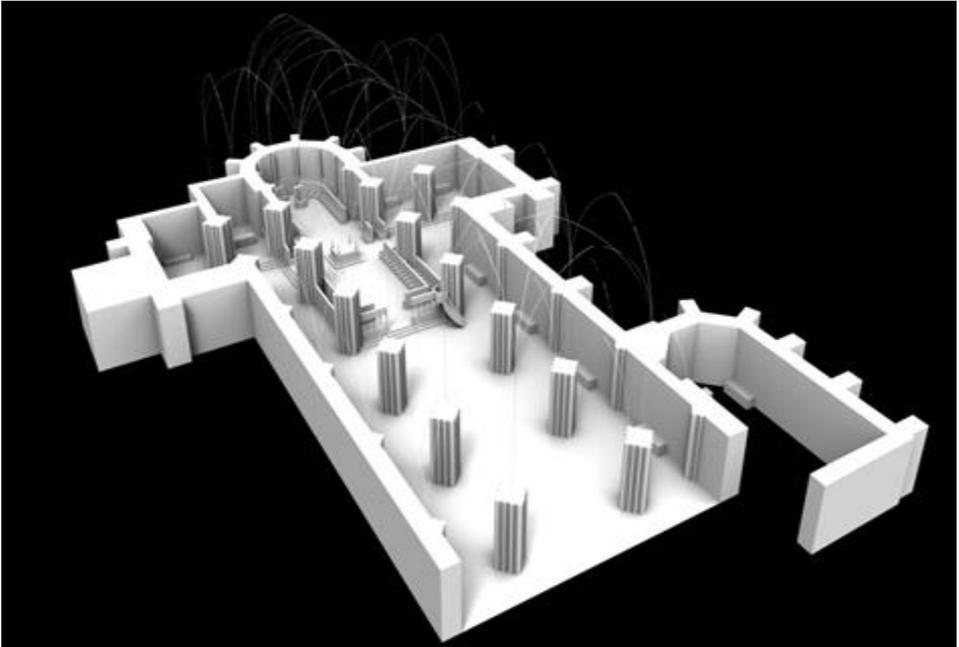


Fig. 6 Model of the interior space of St. Pierre Cathedral before transformation.

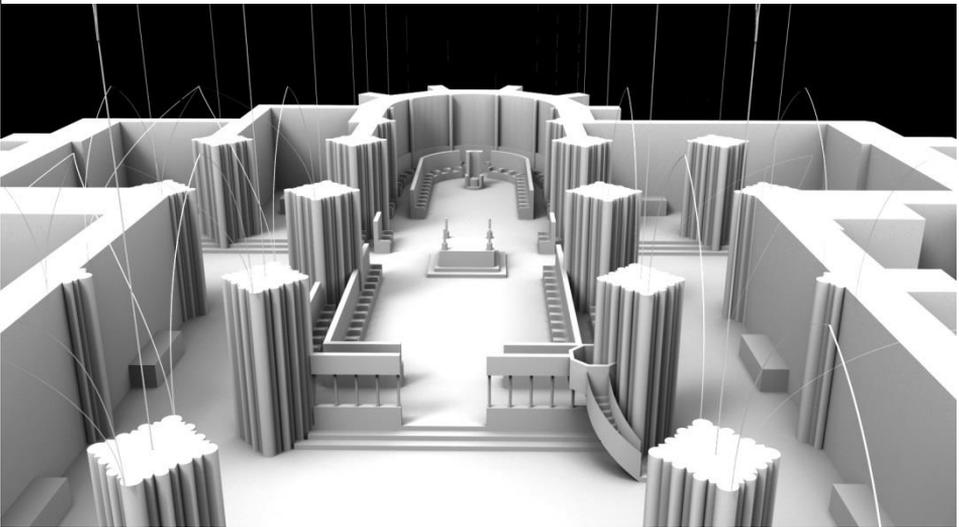


Fig. 7 Choir and high altar, St. Pierre Cathedral, before transformation.

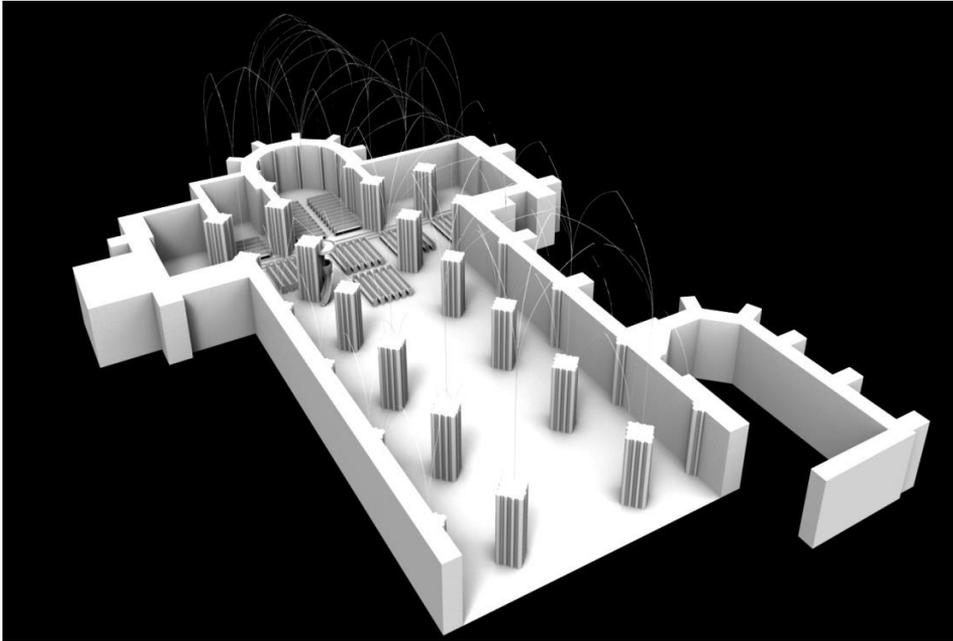


Fig. 8 Model of the interior space of St. Pierre Cathedral after the Reformation.

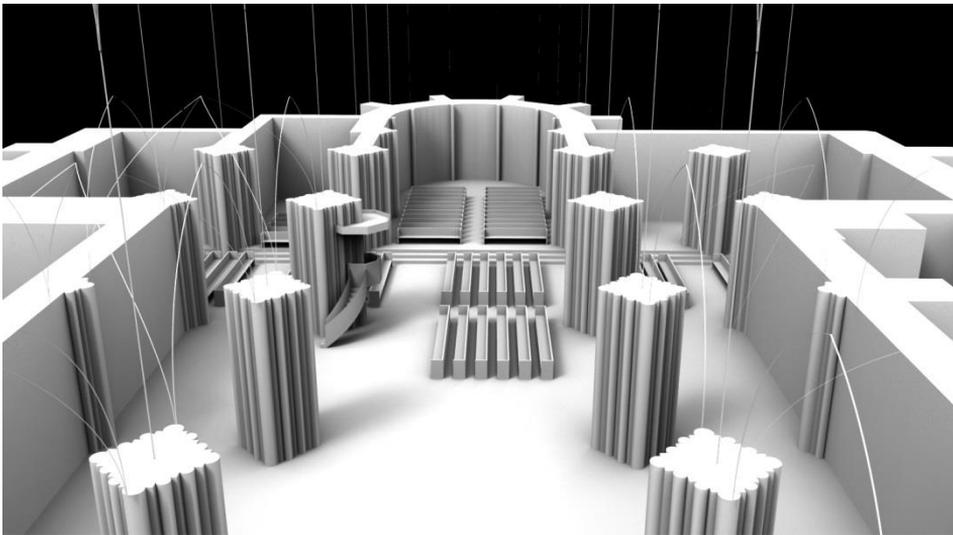


Fig. 9 Pulpit and seating, St. Pierre Cathedral, after transformation.

Calvin's liturgy in St. Pierre was distinguished by a plain and dialogical structure. Reading a portion of the Bible, with the Ten Commandments was done as a calling on behalf of God to the congregation to prayers. When this reading was finished, the minister entered the pulpit, and began with invocation on behalf of congregation;



Fig. 10 Calvin preaching in St. Pierre Cathedral.

then calling the people to accompany him in prayer, he proceeded to the confession of sins, and then to supplication for grace. When this ended the congregation united in praise, singing one of the Psalms as a response. Then, the minister having prayed again invoked the Divine favor and began the sermon with formed the main part of the service on behalf of God. The minister prayed of intercession which followed

the sermon. Then the whole service was terminated, unless the Communion was to be administered, with the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Benediction.<sup>32</sup>

This plain structure of worship nonetheless was not as much appreciated as we might imagine today. During the sixteenth century, a satirical book entitled *Passevent parisien* was published to detract this Reformed worship, in which a dialogue between two men, Passevent and Pasquin, ironically indicated the very characters of Reformed worship and at the same time of the arrangement of the interior:

*"It is like being in a college or school. There are plain benches all around there is a pulpit for the preacher, and in front of it there are low benches for the women and young children. And around them are the higher ones for the men to sit on, without any distinctions between them. The stained glass windows are really battered, and the plaster dust is ankle deep... When they enter the church they choose a place to sit down, as in a school, and there wait for the preacher to come to the*

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<sup>32</sup> Charles Washington Baird, *A Chapter on Liturgies: Historical Sketches* (Knight, 1856), 22.

*pulpit. And when the preacher appears, they get on their knees except for him who is saying the prayers, head uncovered, hands together, and he forms a prayer from his imagination, ending it with the Lord's Prayer... all in French and the people respond softly: So be it. And twice every week before the sermon they sing a psalm or a part of one of them all together: men, women, girls and children, all seated..."*<sup>33</sup>

The accentuation of the provided seating was interesting, because it was unusual at that age to provide seating places for the congregation. It was not until the late 1530s, under the pressure of the ministers, that the civic authorities in Geneva began to install seating.<sup>34</sup> Another observation worth mentioning is that *Passevent* was surprised by the fact that men, women and children gathered together, "without any distinctions between them" (Fig.10, 11). His emphasis reflects that it was not only the space within that was considered within its substance as alike, but also the congregants. The homogeneity of the space also implies the homogeneity of people. It was compatible with the demolishing of the rood screen and choir, which by separating the

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<sup>33</sup> Spicer, *Calvinist Churches in Early Modern Europe*, 14–15.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

space symbolized the separation of the communion of believers. In Calvinistic understanding, there is no difference among the believers for they are the true dwellings of God.<sup>35</sup>

The interior had been white plastered and looked like a college or a school, as said. Such changes had already been completed

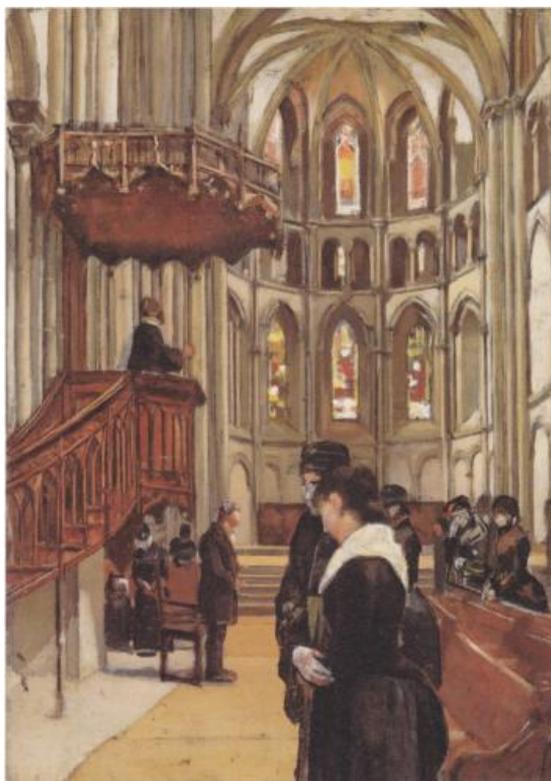


Fig. 11 Prayer in St. Pierre Cathedral, by Ferdinand Hodler, in 1882.

before Calvin and his colleagues began preaching inside of the St. Pierre Cathedral.<sup>36</sup> Although Calvin did not personally lead these

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<sup>35</sup> That is not to say that Calvinism is democratic. In contrast, in the Calvinistic view, the minister is to lead worship by the authority of the office. In the dialogue of worship, he speaks the Word of God to the people. The Reformed are suspicious of untrained and unauthorized members of the congregation giving any messages. See W. Robert Godfrey, "Worship: Evangelical or Reformed?," *New Horizons*, April 2002.

<sup>36</sup> Monter, *Calvin's Geneva*, 13, 53–54.

changes, he did agree with the result, if not necessarily the manner. The white color represents the puritanism, simplicity, and homogeneity of the Calvinistic space. In almost every Calvinistic church, the walls were always painted white. The uniform color represented that the entire space is conceived as an integral whole. There is no more division.

Lastly, re-positioning of the pulpit allowed a larger number of people to hear the preaching, with seating newly installed in the apse, the transepts and at the front of the nave.<sup>37</sup> This position may not have been literally in the center of the space, but when the congregants were seated, they would form an amphitheater around the pulpit which explicitly proclaimed the true focal point of the whole church. Besides the practical reasons, this re-arrangement was also symbolic. The proximate conjunction of the pulpit and the seating signified a verbal and dialogical dynamism in the space. Such an arrangement indicated that the congregations were not onlookers, but participants. As we see in the illustration of Calvin's preaching (Fig.10), the preacher is addressing the congregants; and the congregants are

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<sup>37</sup> Biéler, *Architecture in Worship: The Christian Place of Worship*, 57–60.

looking upwards to the preacher, concentrating on the words. The dialogical dynamism is vividly depicted. As another illustration demonstrates, it is essential not only that the minister is visible and audible to all of the congregation, but also that they can be watched by the minister to ensure that they are receptive and reverent (Fig.11).

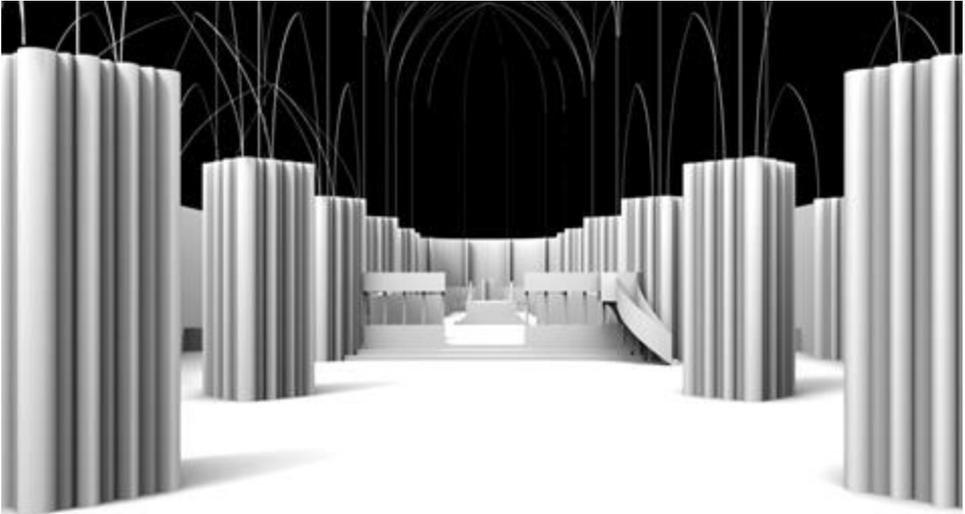


Fig. 12 Spatial sequence of St. Pierre, before transformation. 1/4

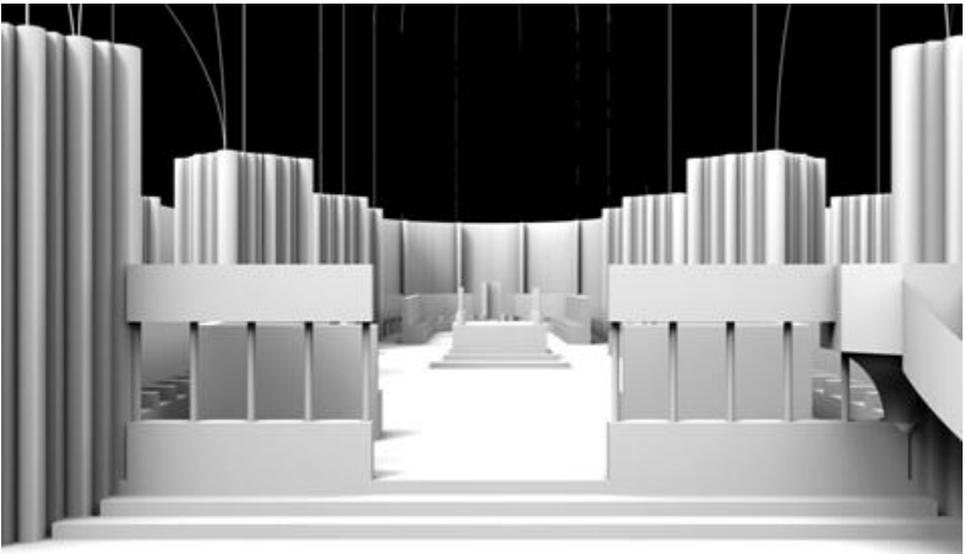


Fig. 13 Spatial sequence of St. Pierre, before transformation. 2/4

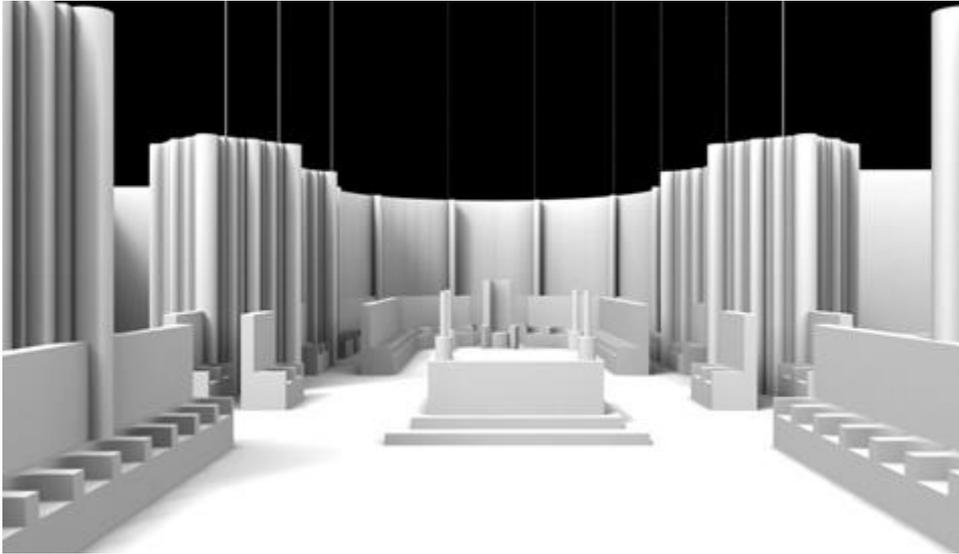


Fig. 14 Spatial sequence of St. Pierre, before transformation. 3/4

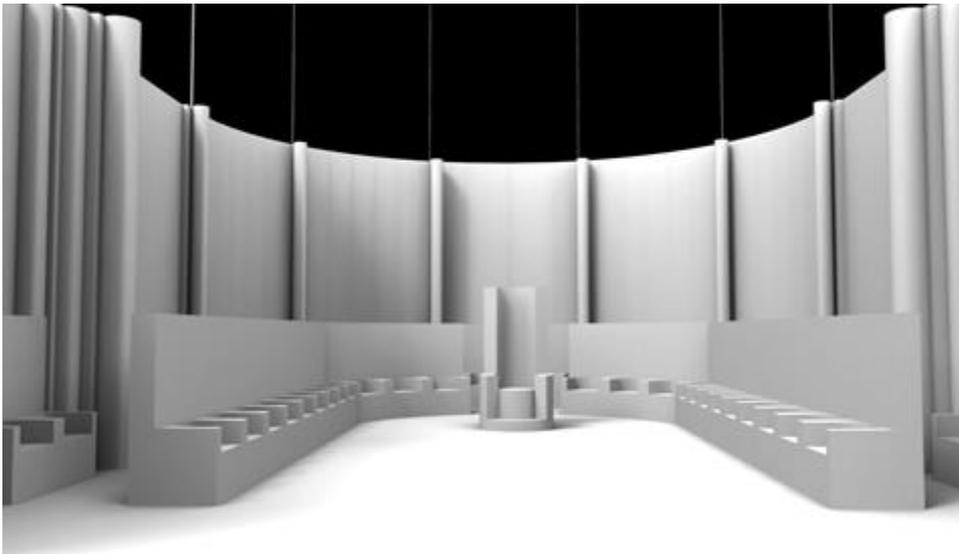


Fig. 15 Spatial sequence of St. Pierre, before transformation. 4/4

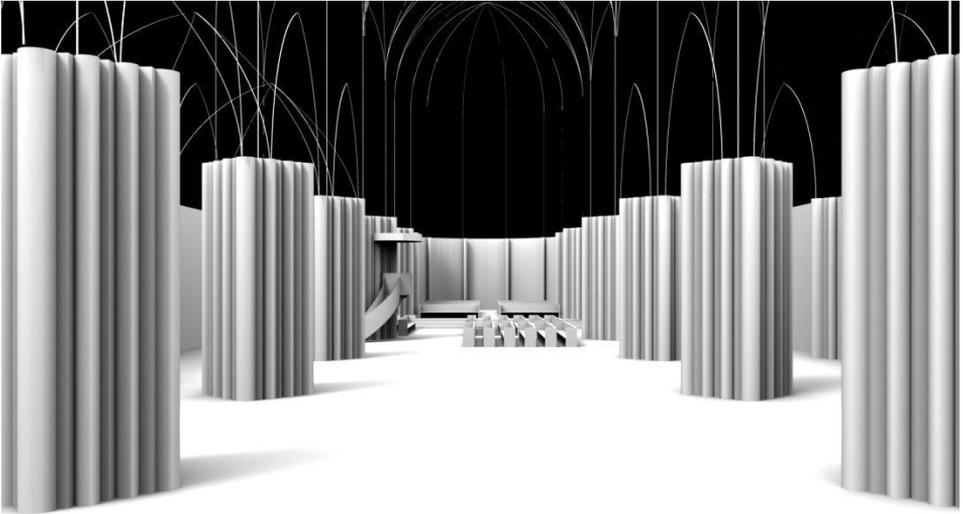


Fig. 16 Spatial sequence of St. Pierre, after transformation. 1/4

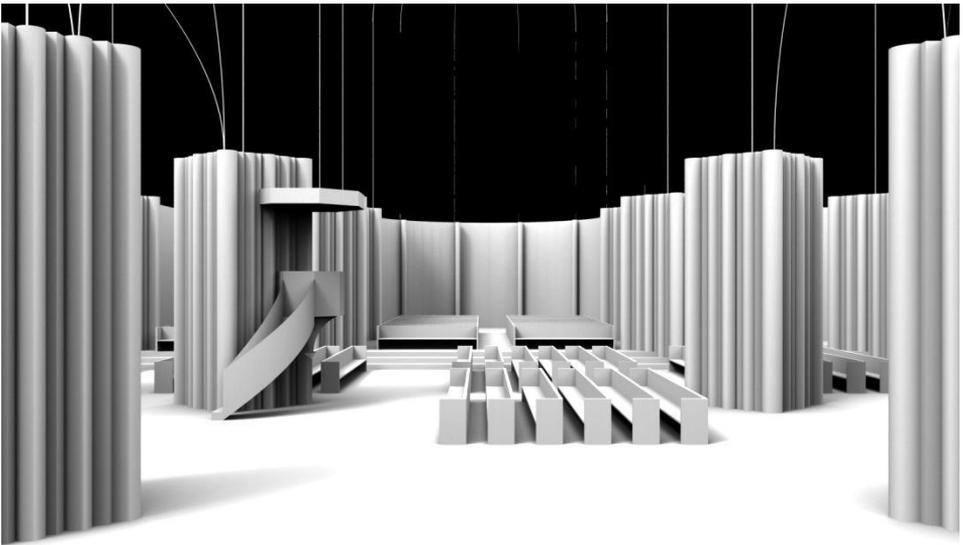


Fig. 17 Spatial sequence of St. Pierre, after transformation. 2/4

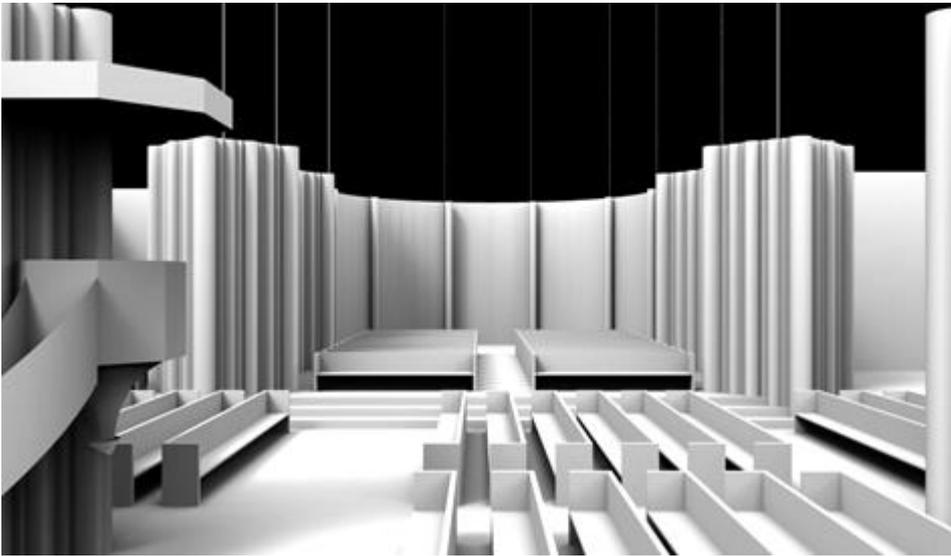


Fig. 18 Spatial sequence of St. Pierre, after transformation. 3/4

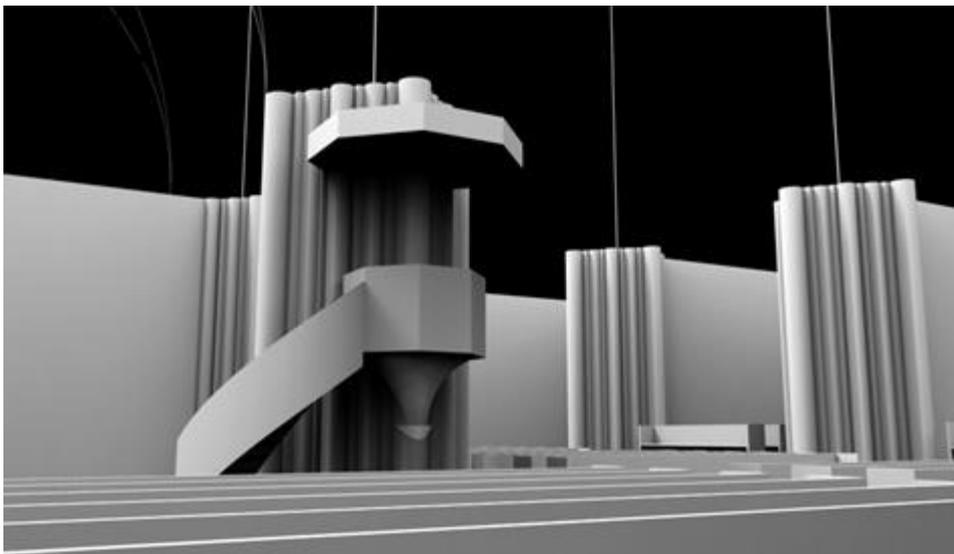


Fig. 19 Spatial sequence of St. Pierre, after transformation. 4/4

## Conclusion

Contrasting to the “receptacle” theory of space, Calvinism holds a different perspective of the space, which derives from Calvin’s emphasis on the transcendence of God and his ontology of church. For Calvin, God is transcendent over the space. The space therefore is neutral and homogeneous *per se*. The term “church”, in Calvin’s understanding, regardless of the distinction between invisible and visible, ontologically means a congregation of people. Consequently, Calvin regarded the church architecture as *adiaphora*, a matter of indifference. In Calvin’s understanding, individuals are living temples of the Holy Spirit; no building structure should be regarded as a sacred place. In such a way, the church architecture is desacralized. Calvinistic liturgy is a liturgy of preached words. The spatial dynamism in Calvinistic service is verbal and dialogical in which the congregations participate, being actively involved with their minds.

St. Pierre Cathedral in Geneva as the starting point of Calvinism has been taken as a case study. We have seen that the rood screen and choir which signified the division of the space and congregation was

removed. Seating for men, women and children were installed. These alterations reflected the homogeneity of the space, also of the congregants. The walls were plastered in white color which represented the puritanism, simplicity, and homogeneity in the Calvinistic space. Re-positioning of the pulpit with seating set around symbolized a verbal and dialogical dynamism in the space.

## **Chapter two: Central Focus**

In the first Chapter, we have looked at the how Calvinism understood the space with relation to the transcendence of God and the ontology of the church, and the difference between the Calvinistic understanding and the “receptacle” theory of space. As a result of it, Calvinism de-sacralized the worship space. The space was regarded now as neutral and homogeneous in substance. We also discussed the verbal and dialogical dynamism in the space where we mentioned that the preaching was the prominent element in the Calvinistic service. In this chapter, we will talk about the central focus in this dialogically dynamic space. The first thing we need to mention is the Calvinistic liturgy.

### **Liturgy of preached words**

The distinguishing character of Calvinistic liturgy is the so-called “regulative” principle of worship. It means that the Christian Bible regulates the ordinances for worship that men cannot be permitted to

add or diminish from the Regulative Principle.<sup>38</sup> In other words, only those elements that are appointed by command, or example, or which can be deduced by good and necessary reasoning from the Bible are permissible in worship. The only place to find these institutions is the Bible. So the doctrine of the regulative principle is tightly related with the Reformation doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* that Scripture alone has the right to stipulate how the Church should worship. It is often contrasted with the “normative” principle of worship which teaches that whatever is not prohibited in the Bible is permitted in worship. The liturgy derives from the regulative principle is radically simply when compared to, not only the medieval rituals, but also the other Protestant systems of Lutheranism and Anglicanism.<sup>39</sup> Only two sacraments are kept in the Calvinistic liturgy: Baptism and Lord’s Supper. The former raised fewer tensions; however, the latter caused a great number of controversies, even within the Reformed history.

The “receptacle” theory of space formed not only the internal arrangement of medieval churches, but also the view of Eucharist.

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<sup>38</sup> Brian M. Schwertley, *Sola Scriptura and the Regulative Principle of Worship* (Reformed Witness, 2000), 68.

<sup>39</sup> Baird, *A Chapter on Liturgies*, 20.

One of the evident influences was the doctrine of transubstantiation which touched the very core of their worship. In the thirteenth session of Council of Trent, it is declared that “a conversion is made of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood.” The consecrated bread and wine in substance were regarded sacred. Thus, the celebration of mass was a service in which the lay congregation was physically, visually, acoustically and linguistically excluded.<sup>40</sup>

Despite of the disapproval of the doctrine of transubstantiation, there were indeed great disputes over this sacrament even within the Protestantism. While Luther stood on the corporal presence “in, with, and under” the bread and wine, on the other hand, Zwingli taught the “real absence” of Christ and the Supper is merely a commemoration of Christ’s sacrificial death. Calvin had a distinct opinion. For Calvin, there is indeed a “real presence” in the Supper, yet not corporally, but spiritually. In his own *Genevan Catechism* (1545) Calvin wrote, “[Holy Spirit] makes us partakers of his [Christ’s]

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<sup>40</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV:xvii:2,7.

substance that thus we may have one life with him.” This occurs through the “secret and miraculous agency of the Spirit, to whom it is not difficult to unite things otherwise disjoined by a distant space.”<sup>41</sup> The Belgic Confession explains this point more clearly: “we do not go wrong when we say that we drink the natural body and what is drunk is his own blood—but the manner in which we eat it is not through the mouth, but by the Spirit, through faith.”<sup>42</sup> In the Calvinistic understanding, the real presence is not corporally, that is physically, but spiritually received, not by mouth, but by faith. The bread and wine remain neutral in their substance. In the Scot’s Confession, it is written, “the Holy Ghost, who by true faith carries us above all things that are visible, canal, and earthly, and makes us to feed upon the body and blood of Christ”. So the sacrament of Lord’s Supper is regarded as a spiritual feast wherein the covenantal people of God witness the truth that “[Christ] himself is living bread on which our souls feed”.<sup>43</sup>

Calvin, in his appreciation of the sacrament, believed that “all

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<sup>41</sup> John Calvin, *Genevan Catechism*, Q. 350–351.

<sup>42</sup> Guido de Brès, *Belgic Confession of Faith*, article 35.

<sup>43</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV:xvii:1.

well-ordered churches should be to celebrate the Supper frequently”<sup>44</sup>, and suggested the frequency would be “at least once a week.”<sup>45</sup> Only a year after the city of Geneva officially embraced the Reformation, John Calvin drew up *Articles for Organization of the Church and Worship at Geneva* (1537). Even this early in his career as a reformer he asserted in the Articles, “a Church cannot be said to be well ordered and regulated unless in it the Holy Supper of our Lord is always being celebrated and frequented...”<sup>46</sup> However, for the practical requirement of discipline, there were only 4 times administrations of the Lord’s Supper in Geneva each year, and consequently did not become a focus of weekly worship.<sup>47</sup> In order not to be confused with the medieval practices, they were apt to use modest wooden tables which appear more like a supper table than a stone altar, and were only set up when the administrations were scheduled. As a result of the low frequency of the sacraments, in the Calvinistic rituals, preaching became the central element every week.

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<sup>44</sup> John Calvin, *A Short Treatise on the Lord’s Supper*, 29.

<sup>45</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV:xvii:43.

<sup>46</sup> S. Horton Michael, “At Least Weekly: The Reformed Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper and of Its Frequent Celebration,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology*, no. 11 (2000): 147–69.

<sup>47</sup> Spicer, *Calvinist Churches in Early Modern Europe*, 5.

The Calvinistic liturgy therefore became a liturgy of words.

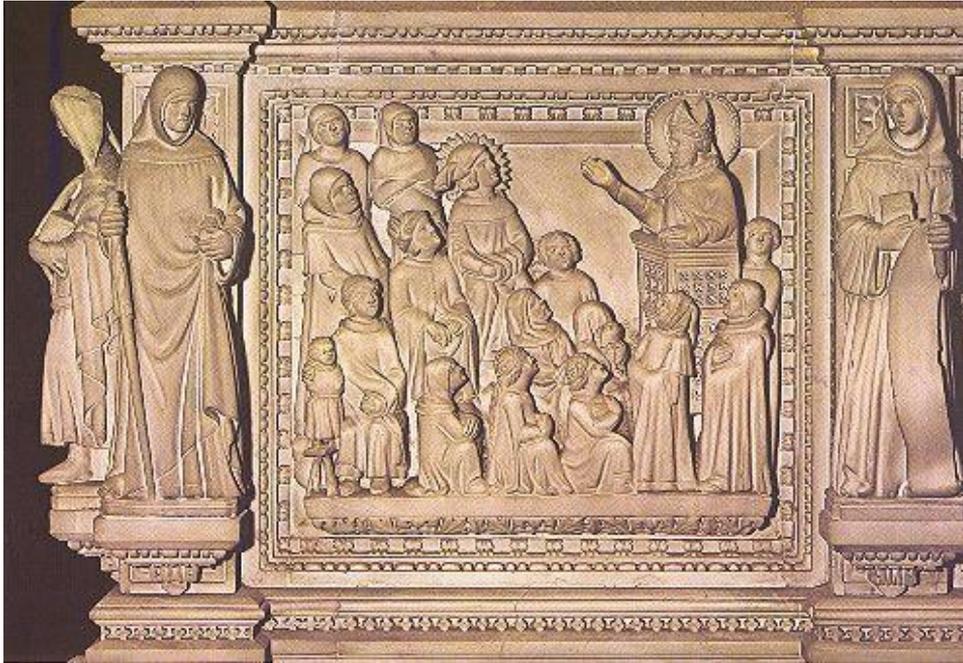


Fig. 20 The left relief on the tomb of St. Augustine in San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro, Pavia, 1362.

However, preaching was not something invented by the Reformation.<sup>48</sup> In fact, Christianity was started by the preaching at the very outset when apostles preached the Christian messages. In the early churches, an ambo (podium) on an elevated platform was

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<sup>48</sup> Donald K. McKim and David F. Wright, *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 289.

often used for reading the scriptures and for preaching. There were many preaching practices before, for example, John Chrysostom preached from an ambo rather than spoke from the cathedra at the far end of the church in order to be understood better; Ambrose of Milan also adopted the same practice.<sup>49</sup> However, in the liturgy of late-medieval world, preaching had lost track and become neglected.<sup>50</sup> The Reformation rediscovered preaching and advocated it as the central element of their liturgy. It is safe to say that it is most essential element of worship in all Calvinistic churches (if not all Evangelical churches). Preaching is the means through which the intelligible words as the exposition of the Bible are conveyed to the worshippers. Calvin wrote in his *Institutes*, “God inspires us with faith ...by the instrumentality of his gospel.”<sup>51</sup> “He feeds us with spiritual nourishment, and provides whatever is conducive to our salvation.”<sup>52</sup> “He is pleased to instruct us in the present day by human means”, and “he deigns to consecrate the mouths and tongues of men

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<sup>49</sup> In the leftmost relief of the tomb's front side, it is depicted Augustine and Alipius was listening to St. Ambrose preaching. See Fig. 20.

<sup>50</sup> McKim and Wright, *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 289.

<sup>51</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV:i:5.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, IV:i:10.

to his service, making his own voice to be heard in them”, so that “we listen to his ministers just as we would to himself”.<sup>53</sup> “The preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God”.<sup>54</sup> So it is unmistakable to notice that Calvin held a particular high view of preaching. And the preaching is *de facto* the central focus of the Calvinistic worship.

## **Pulpit and seating**

The pulpit had rarely been conceived of as a liturgical center in the medieval churches. It was often located on a pilaster at the transept, rendering the central focus of the altar at the east end. The Calvinistic emphasis on preaching inspired new approaches to church architecture and space. Since the pulpit is regarded as the vehicle through which God communicates his divine will and directs his people, Reformers thoughtfully altered and elaborated the pulpit to heighten its visual appeal. Calvinistic churches use large, elevated pulpits, and often place articulately large sounding boards above

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, IV:i:5.

<sup>54</sup> *Second Helvetic Confession*, chap. I.

them to project sound out over the congregation.<sup>55</sup>

In many Dutch Calvinistic churches, the pulpits were ornately decorated. Albert Vinckenbrinck (1604-1665), a Dutch Golden Age



Fig. 21 A detailed carving on the banister of pulpit staircase in Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam, by Albert Vinckenbrinck 1649-64.

sculptor, made an enormous and breathtaking pulpit for the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam (Fig.21). The acoustical quality was still an issue in Calvinistic architecture. However, it was more concerned for preaching rather than music.

The long reverberation was not favorable for it may have confused the articulation of preaching. In an age without the electronic amplification, it was partially solved by installing sounding boards, or by bringing the

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<sup>55</sup> Bruggink and Droppers, *Christ and Architecture Building Presbyterian/Reformed Churches*, 94.

congregation closer to the pulpit. This was also the reason why the new-erected Calvinistic churches were relatively smaller in size.

Effective preaching and emphasized pulpit radically influenced the church architecture and consequently church life. For the laity in the late sixteenth century, who were now attending the services in which God was now speaking through a preacher, answering questions, explaining things that were once mysteries. They could now read Bible that had been translated into understandable vernaculars, comprehend more of the preaching, reflect and meditate on it. They were not passive audiences, but attentive recipients and responders of the words.<sup>56</sup> Thus preaching was not merely dependent upon the one-sided individual preacher's ability to convince, but a dialogue between two parties, which we discussed in the previous chapter. Prior to the Reformation, benches were available only for the wealthy, which were generally provided through their own efforts. However, the attentiveness of the audience during long sermons in Reformed worship requires benches accommodating as many worshippers as

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<sup>56</sup> T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 48–53.

possible.<sup>57</sup> Any little movement of impatience would break the “decent order” in the worship. It was therefore not only important that the preacher was visible and audible to the congregation, but equally important that they could be watched by the preacher to ensure that they were attentive and reverent. In the Calvinistic churches, the congregational seating was always orientated around or towards the pulpit.

Another feature in Reformed churches was the gallery. The purpose of galleries was plainly to supply more accommodation for the attending worshippers to listen to the sermons, at the same time to reflect the liturgical centralization of preaching. However, I would suggest that gallery sometimes may raise problems, because it may be difficult for the ministers to watch over the people on gallery. So it may leave the worshippers beyond the supervision of the minister and perhaps irrelevant. Nonetheless, the careful spatial arrangement of seating manifested the sole permanent focus of Reformed worship which is the pulpit, at the same time fostered the attentiveness of the congregants.

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<sup>57</sup> Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space*, 118.

## Case study: Calvinist Churches in France

**Before the wars.** The influence of Calvin was evident in France. While the Bible was translated into French by Pierre Olivétan<sup>58</sup>, and the *Institutes* was published, Calvinism spread into the French world. As a Frenchman in Geneva, Calvin was closely connected with the Reformation occurring in his homeland. Under the persecution, a great number of French Calvinists who were dubbed as Huguenots,

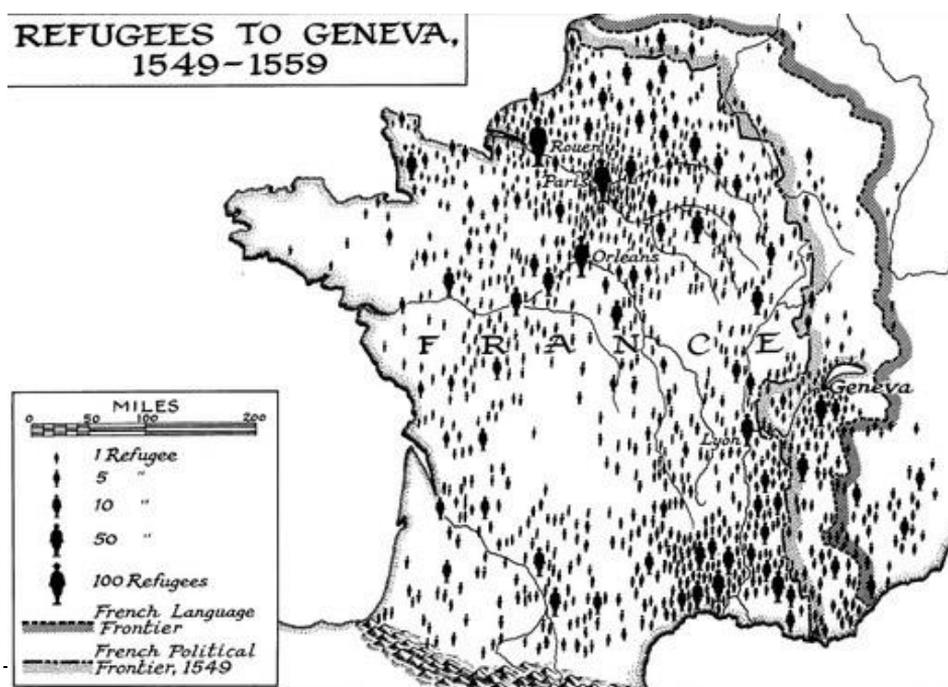


Fig. 22 French Refugees to Geneva 1549-59.

crowded into Geneva and made its population double between 1545 and 1560 (Fig.22). From 1555 on, a number of Reformed churches were established in France. Calvin gave them his advice and sent them pastors who had been trained in the Geneva Academy. In such a way, Geneva provided leadership for the French Calvinists.<sup>59</sup> In spite of the persecution and public hostility since the late reign of Francis I, by the middle of sixteenth century, the Huguenots had increased remarkably in number and power, particularly among the nobles, such as Louis Bourbon, Prince of Condé, and Jeanne d'Albret, Queen regnant of Navarre.<sup>60</sup> As early as 1559, about fifty congregations gathered in Paris as a national synod formally organized the French Reformed Church, produced a Constitution of Ecclesiastical Discipline and a Confession of Faith which showed a strong Calvinistic influence.<sup>61</sup> It is estimated that in the 1560s, more than half of the nobility were Calvinists, and from 1,200 to 1,250 Calvinistic churches had been established. By 1562 with the outbreak of war, there were 2 million Calvinists.<sup>62</sup> In fact, nearly all the *architectes du roi*, that is the official

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<sup>59</sup> Robert Jean Knecht, *The French Wars of Religion, 1559-1598* (Harlow: Longman, 1996), 6.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 16–17.

<sup>61</sup> McKim and Wright, *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 181.

<sup>62</sup> Knecht, *The French Wars of Religion, 1559-1598*, 10.

architects for the king, were confessional Calvinists.<sup>63</sup>

Since the Reformed movement had gathered momentum, the initial solutions of using suburban residential houses, courtyards or barns had become insufficient for the large congregations.<sup>64</sup> In a number of towns, Calvinists petitioned the authorities for permission to use existing churches. Some petitions were approved, such as the Franciscan church in Nérac, Orléans, Tours and Lyon. Yet more were frequently rejected, which prompted inappropriate seizure of the buildings. However Calvin criticized their imprudence. He told Parisian community in 1561 that “to make merry and occupy temples, you know that has never been our advice, unless permission has been granted”.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Catharine Randall, “Structuring Protestant Scriptural Space in Sixteenth-century Catholic France,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, no. XXV/2 (1994).

<sup>64</sup> Andrew Spicer, “Huguenots, Jesuits and French Religious Architecture in Early Seventeenth Century France” (presented at the Adventure of religious pluralism in early modern France, Oxford: Peter Lang, 1999), 247.

<sup>65</sup> Spicer, *Calvinist Churches in Early Modern Europe*, 168–9.

The *modus vivendi* of the Crown with this booming Reformed faith was the Edict of Saint-Germain issued in January 1562, which for the first time granted concessions to the Reformed movement and



Fig. 23 The Massacre of Vassy, from *Tortorel and Perrisin's Le Premier Volume* (c.1569)

permitted the gathering outside the towns for exercising their religion. The Huguenots seized the opportunity to worship openly.

Although this edict represented the acceptance of Reformed worship

in France, even before it had been registered by the Parliament, a faction of armed soldiers under Duke of Guise attacked a Huguenot service in Wassy-sur-Blaise (Vassy), massacring the worshippers and most of the residents of the town on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 1562. It was known as the Massacre of Vassy. An engraving of the Massacra of Vassy was published in circa 1569 by Tortorel and Perrisin (Fig.23). In his engraving, although it is sad that the community was gathered in a barn, we can still see some typical elements of Calvinistic churches such as the pulpit in the end and the gallery, The room was depicted like a polygonal form. These details revealed the architectural practices of the early Calvinistic churches. The Massacre of Vassy eventually inaugurated a series of eight civil wars which lasted until the Edict of Nantes in 1598.

The Huguenots were initially successful in this war. They seized a third of the sixty largest cities in France, and took over the existing churches for their worship. However, the Crown recovered soon and began to recapture these towns. In March 1563 the First War came to an end with the Edict of Amboise. The edict required the Huguenots to return the seized church properties, and permitted them to

construct their own places of worship in certain restricted areas. Thus, there were many Calvinistic church buildings erected, providing structural evidence of the religious diversity in France. One of these early churches was Temple de Paradis, or Temple of Heavens, in Lyon in 1564.

## Temple de Paradis, Lyon (1564)

Temple de Paradis was one of three temples constructed in Lyon after the Huguenots gave back the occupied Catholic churches. The detailed information of the temples from that period is barely discovered.



Fig. 24 Temple de Paradis, Lyon, France, 1564. Source from *Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français*.

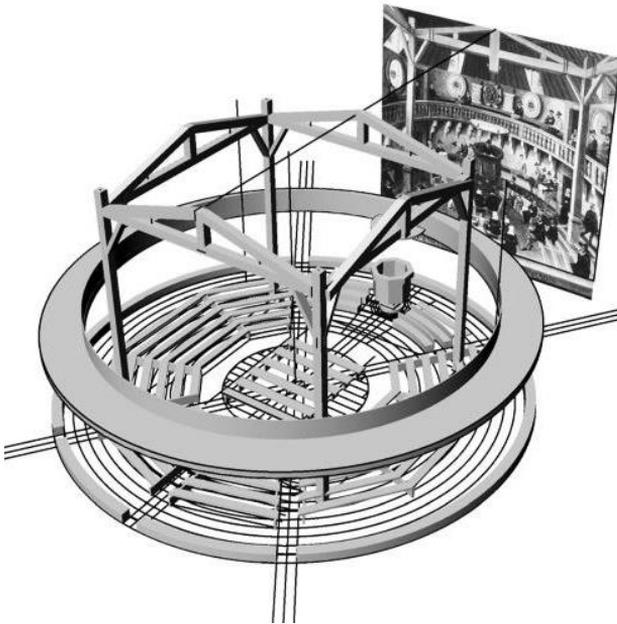


Fig. 25 Modeling process, Temple de Paradis.

Being torn down a mere four years after its construction, Temple de Paradis is exceptionally better known due to some significantly invaluable drawings provided by a French artist of sixteenth century, Jean Perrissin (Fig.24).<sup>66</sup>

Even though the painting is stylized, it tells us much about the appearance of these early temples. A simple model is also made based on this drawing. (Fig.25)

The exterior drawing is sketchy. What it tells is that it was a circular structure in a simple classical style with columns and some stone

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 173.

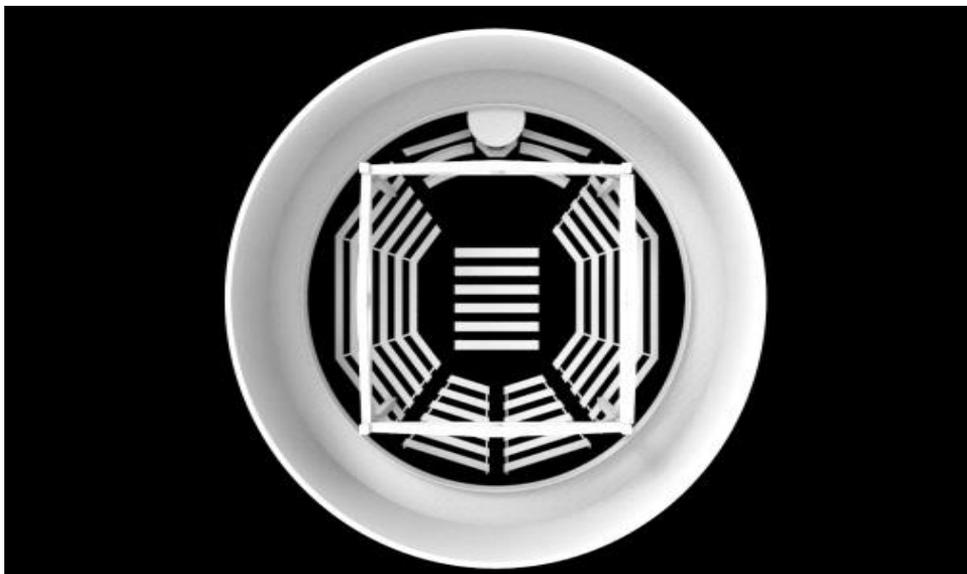


Fig. 26 Top view, the Temple of Paradis.

decorations around the doors and windows.<sup>67</sup> The oval windows at gallery-floor level and dormer windows in the domed roof illuminate the room.

The drawing of the interior space is much more interesting. A plainly exposed timber frame with four wooden pillars supports the conical

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<sup>67</sup> It is worthy to mention that some of the Reformers, like Martin Bucer, did write about the circular model which was considered as good for preaching. Bucer said, "*From the plan of the most ancient temples, and from the writings of the holy fathers, it is well known that among the ancients the position of the clergy was in the middle of the temples, which were usually round; and from that position divine service was so presented to the people that the things recited could be clearly heard and understood by all who were present.*" See *Ibid.*, 12.

roof. The gallery hold by corbels encircles the room, forms another level of space. At one end, a large octagonal canopied pulpit stood upon a narrow pedestal, which looked like a wine glass as a whole. A sounding board was installed on the gallery with an hour-glass hanging beneath it to time the length of service. It is a typical element in Calvinist architecture in both practical and symbolical means. Beneath the pulpit two rows of benches on both side offer seating: the front bench is occupied by children with books in hands perhaps catechisms, while the bench behind them is covered with a tapestry of *fleurs-de-lys*. Seated on this bench are men wearing red robes, indicating that they were municipal or legal officials. Semicircle rudimentary benches place around the rest of the room and horizontally to the pulpit in the center of the room provide seating for more people (Fig.27). This seating arrangement witnesses that the pulpit stands as the central focus of the space. The people gathered in this space are organized by the seating into a unified body, into a corporate entity: men, women, children, citizens, and officials all together. Again, it recalls the Calvinistic concept of the homogeneity of the space and the congregants. The benches occupy the entire room and are closely arranged to indicate that congregants are supposed to

sit and listen attentively to the service.<sup>68</sup>

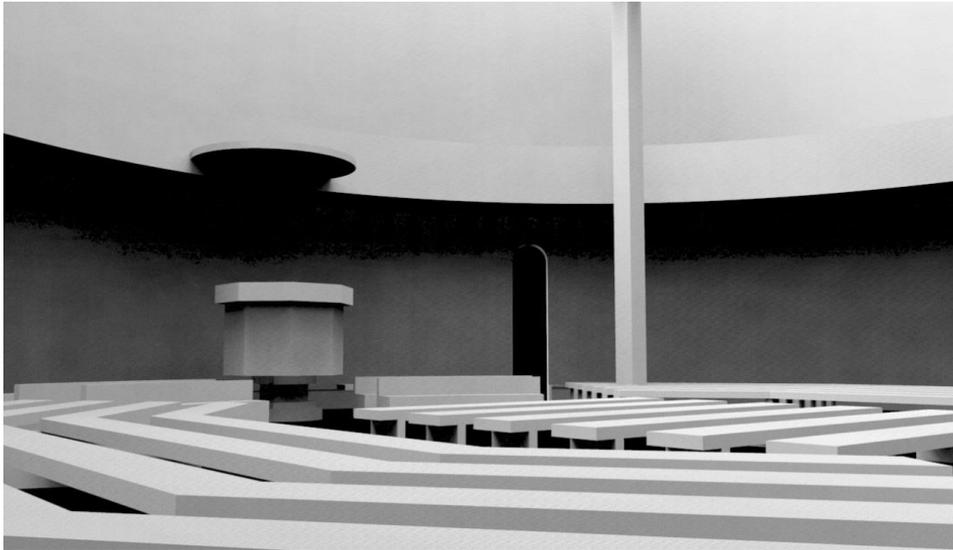


Fig. 27 View from seating to pulpit, Temple of Paradis.

This stylized representation gives a unique perspective of the ritual. We need to be aware that Perrissin's painting is allegorical rather than realistic. It depicts many events within one single picture. The ceremony of baptism is indicated with a woman entering the building with a basin. It implies that there was no font. A couple seated before the pulpit with the presence of a dog on the left, which was commonly painted as a symbol of fidelity; this is a typical scene of marriage. The

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<sup>68</sup> Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space*, 123.

Communion table is absent, which indicates that the Lord's Supper is not a frequent ritual. However, with no doubt a sermon is being delivered by the minister. It is interesting to note that the depiction of this interior is not devoid of decoration and some parts are particularly rendered with details. First of all, the pulpit is carefully depicted with several curved legs on the pedestal. The dark wood material of the pulpit looks polished and much richer than those of seating. The small detail of the hour-glass demonstrates that the long time preaching was unmistakable feature in Calvinistic service. The balusters and the corbels on the gallery are carefully depicted, which add a decorative fringe to the edge of the gallery. Such details counter the common generalization that Calvinism forbids ornamentation.

Unfortunately Le Paradis was short-lived. It was destroyed in 1567, just before the second war. The name "Paradis" was kept for the street where the temple was located. What kept with the name was the invaluable historical heritage as one of the earliest evidence of the Calvinistic practices.

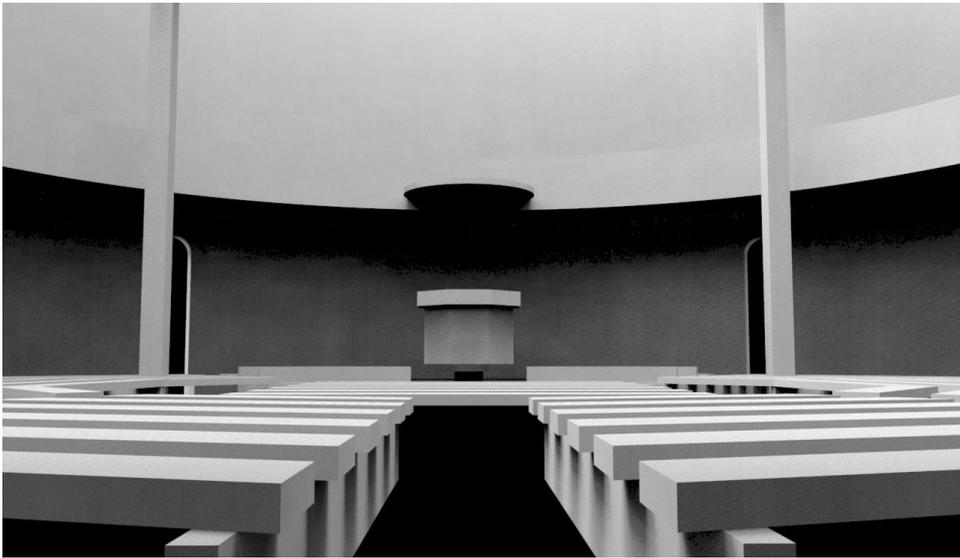


Fig. 28 View from the front benches to the pulpit, Temple of Paradis.

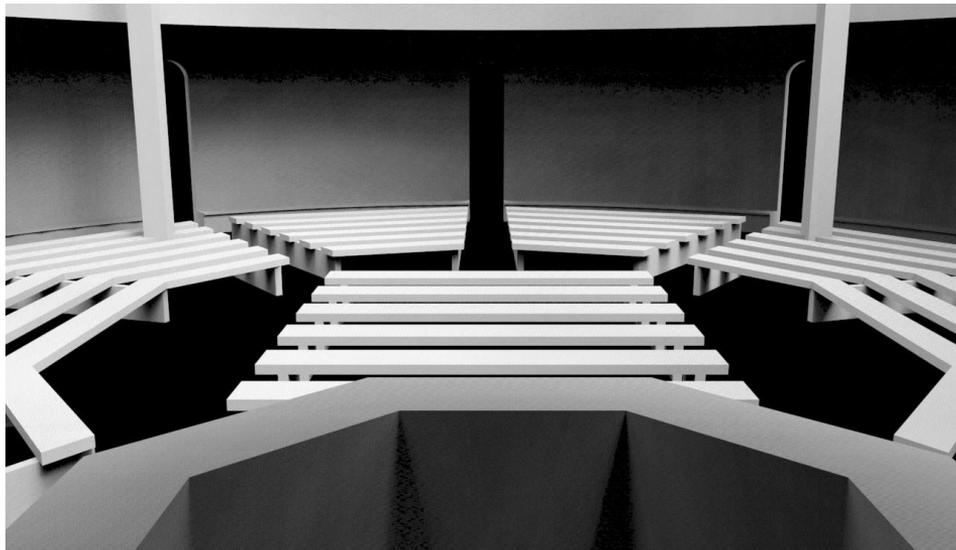


Fig. 29 View from the pulpit to the benches, Temple of Paradis.

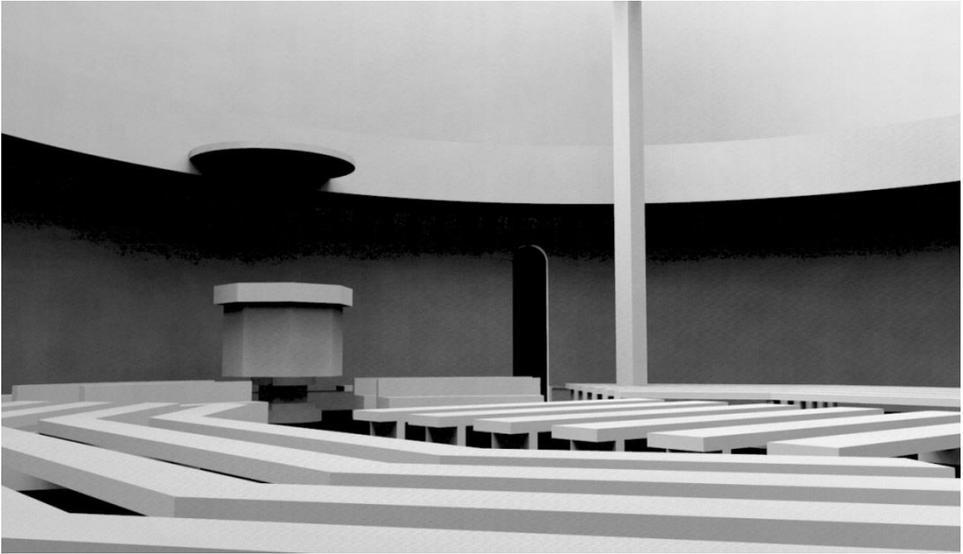


Fig. 30 View from the side benches to the pulpit, Temple of Paradis.



Fig. 31 View from gallery to the pulpit, Temple of Paradis.

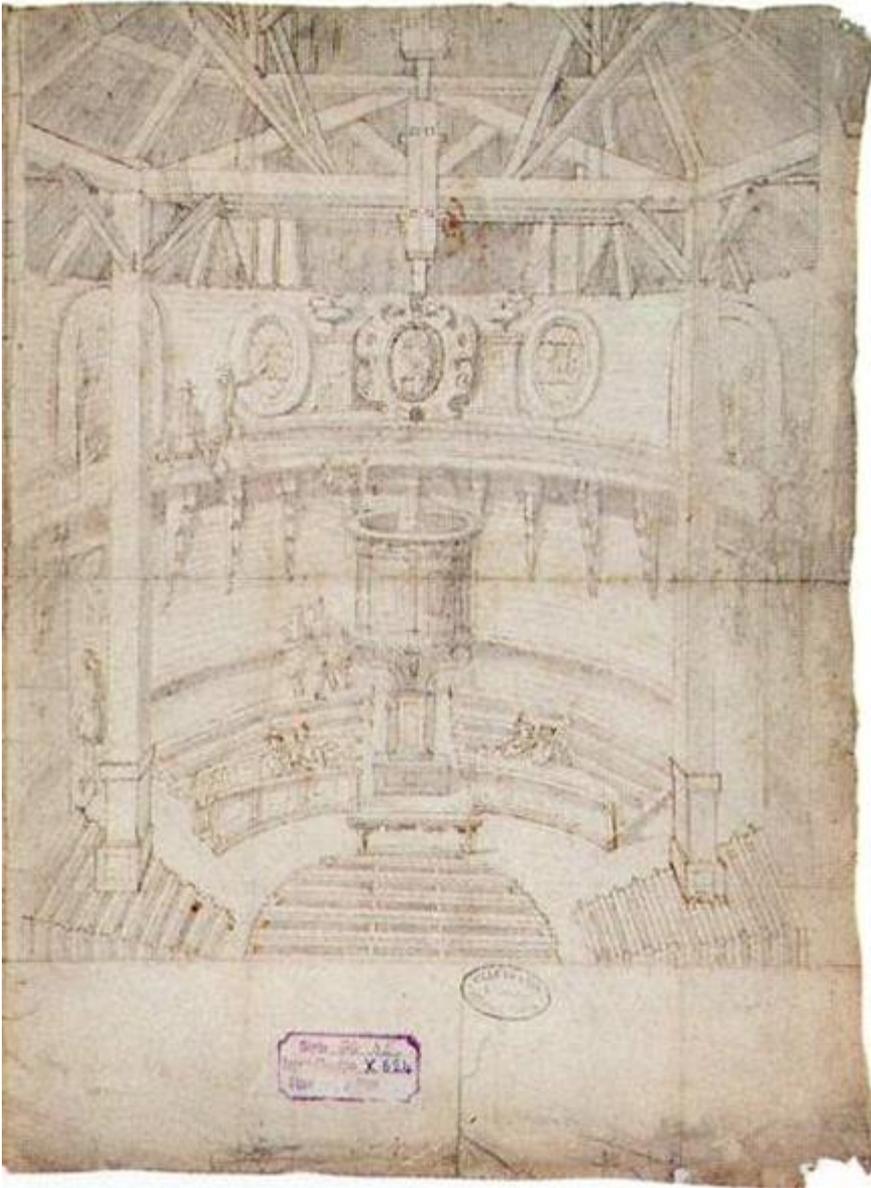


Fig. 32 Temple de Paradis, by Jean Perrissin, 1561. Source from *Archives municipales de Lyon*.

## **Temple de Charenton (1623)**

After a series of edicts during the religious wars, the Edict of Nantes was concluded, which granted concessions to the Huguenots and defined the places where they were permitted to worship. The edict prompted a remarkable increase in the number of temples, and Reformed worship was re-established in areas where congregations had earlier been suppressed. The Temple of Charenton is perhaps the best-known church during this period of reconciliation. Compared to The Temple de Paradis, it was a very different structure.

The Edict of Nantes had specifically prohibited the protestant worship within five leagues of Paris that is about 27.8 kilometers away. As a solution, the Parisian congregation purchased a property in Albon and erected a temple there.<sup>69</sup> The building was complete at the end of 1601 by a royal architect Jacques Androuet du Cerceau II. Du Cerceau was involved in many well-known projects such as *Palais du Louvre* and *Place Royale* in Paris, but he was also a member of the Huguenot community. It was said that a number of royal architects

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<sup>69</sup> Spicer, *Calvinist Churches in Early Modern Europe*, 193.

were confessional Calvinists. However, the inconvenience of the site induced complains among the Parisians, and it was suggested that the temple was too small to meet the needs of the congregation. In 1606, they received permission to transfer to Charenton and purchased a site in late August (Fig.33).<sup>70</sup> It seems that someone pointed out to King Henri IV that Charenton was closer than the stipulated five leagues. However the King retorted and said that from now on “Charenton will be regarded as being five leagues from Paris”.<sup>71</sup>

The first temple at Charenton was again designed by Jacques II Androuet du Cerceau. However, it was relatively short-lived, and was burnt down in 1621. Another building was erected at Charenton by Du Cerceau’ nephew Salomon de Brosse who was another celebrated royal architect, best known as the architect of the *Luxembourg Palace* for *Marie de Médici*.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Source from *Foundation Crommelin Family NL*.

<sup>72</sup> De Brosse was born into a Protestant family. During the war, his family endured much persecution. After the promulgation of the Edict of Nantes, he moved to Paris. They lived in the Quartier St.-Germain, which was known for its extensive Huguenots population.

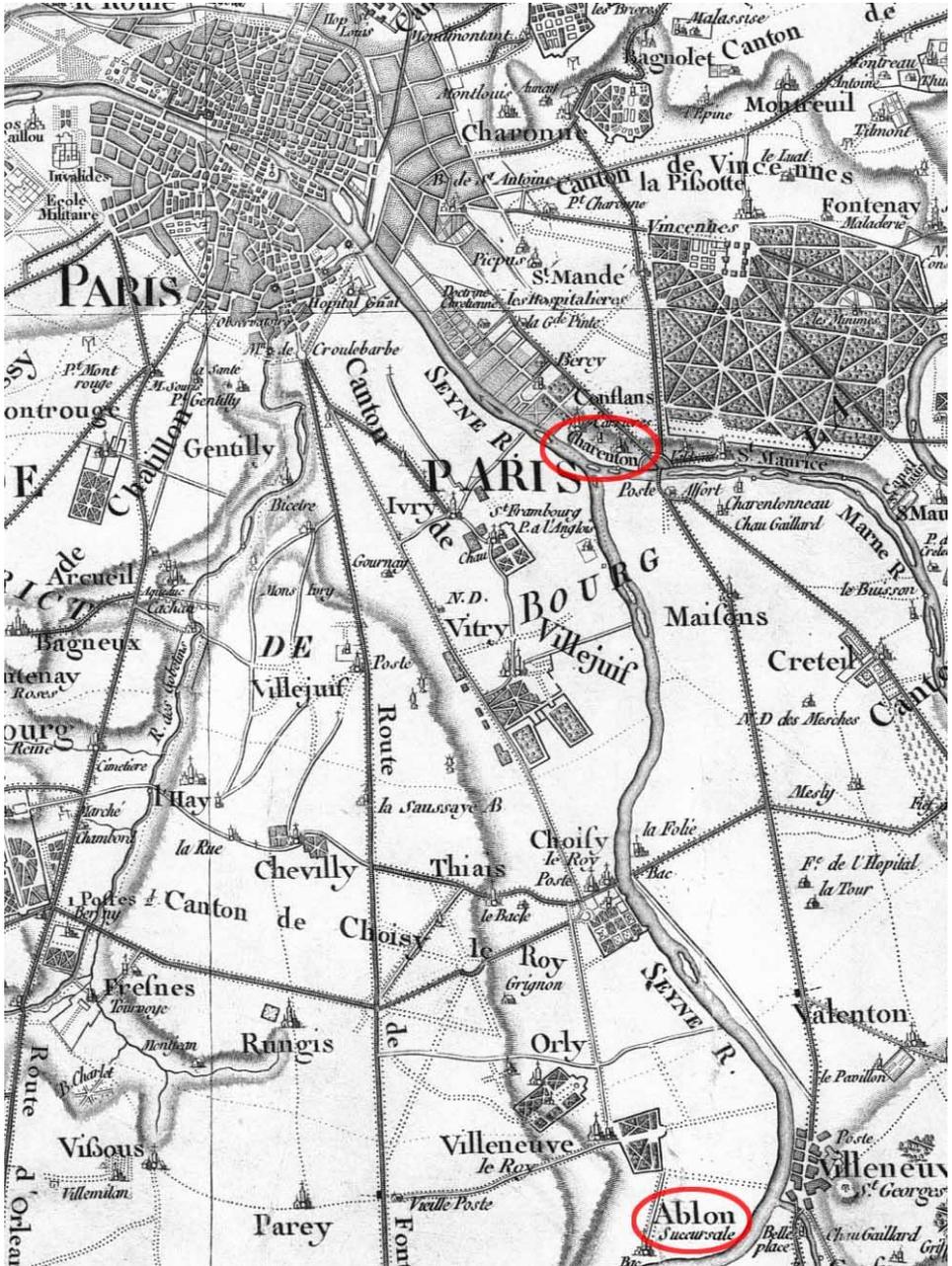


Fig. 33 Map of Paris, locations of Charenton are highlighted.

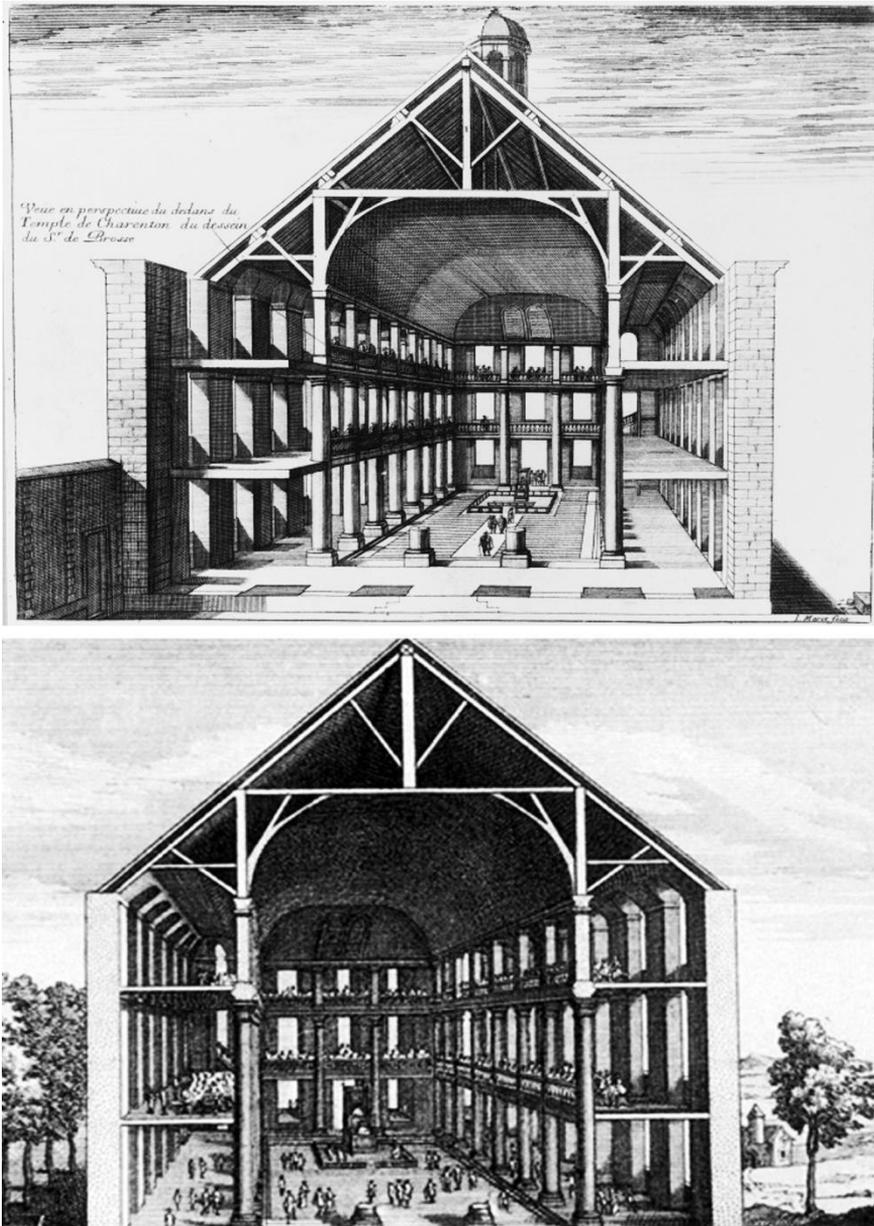


Fig. 34 Temple of Charenton. Source from *Musée virtuel du protestantisme*.

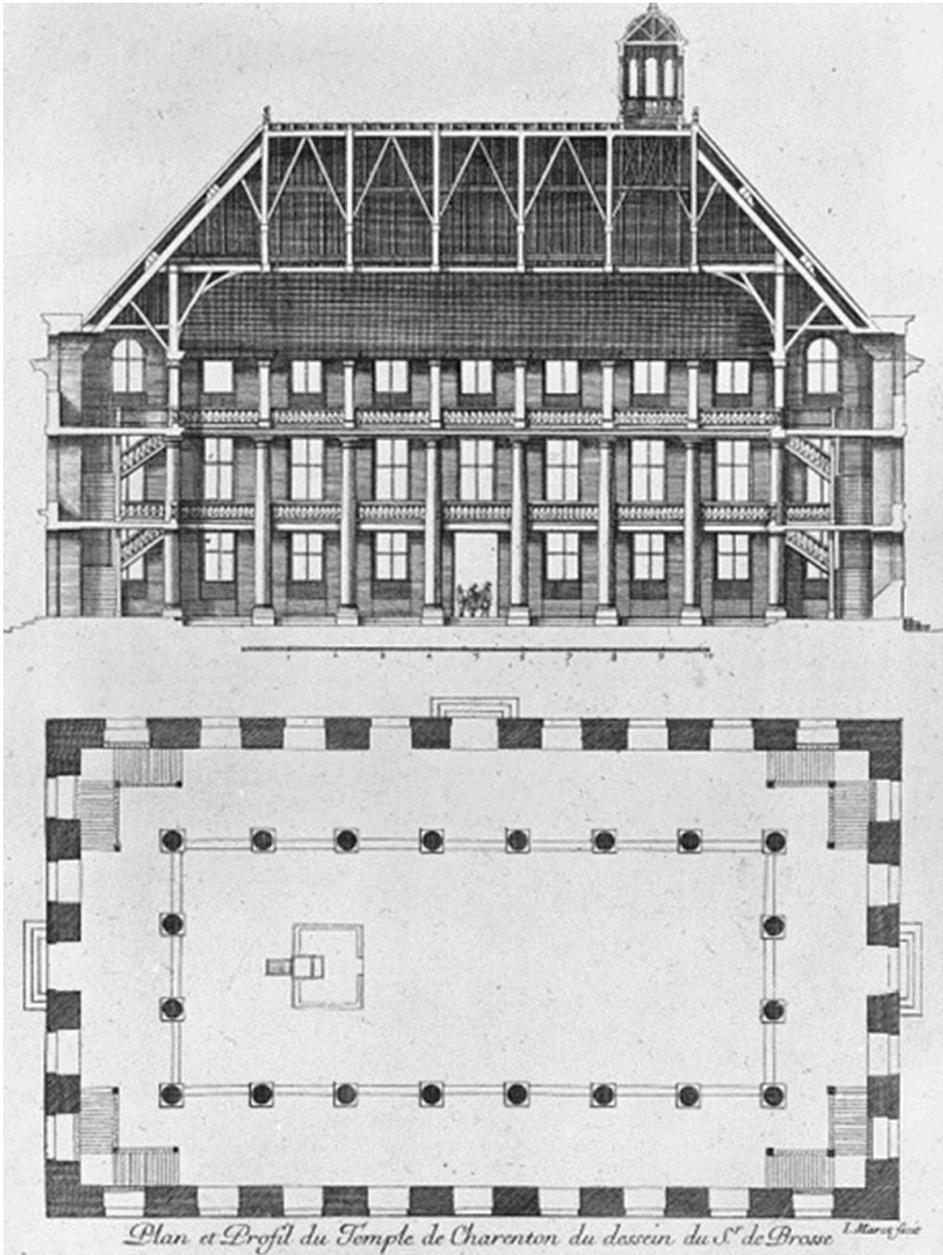


Fig. 35 Plan & section, Temple of Charenton, Source from *Courtauld Institute of Art*.

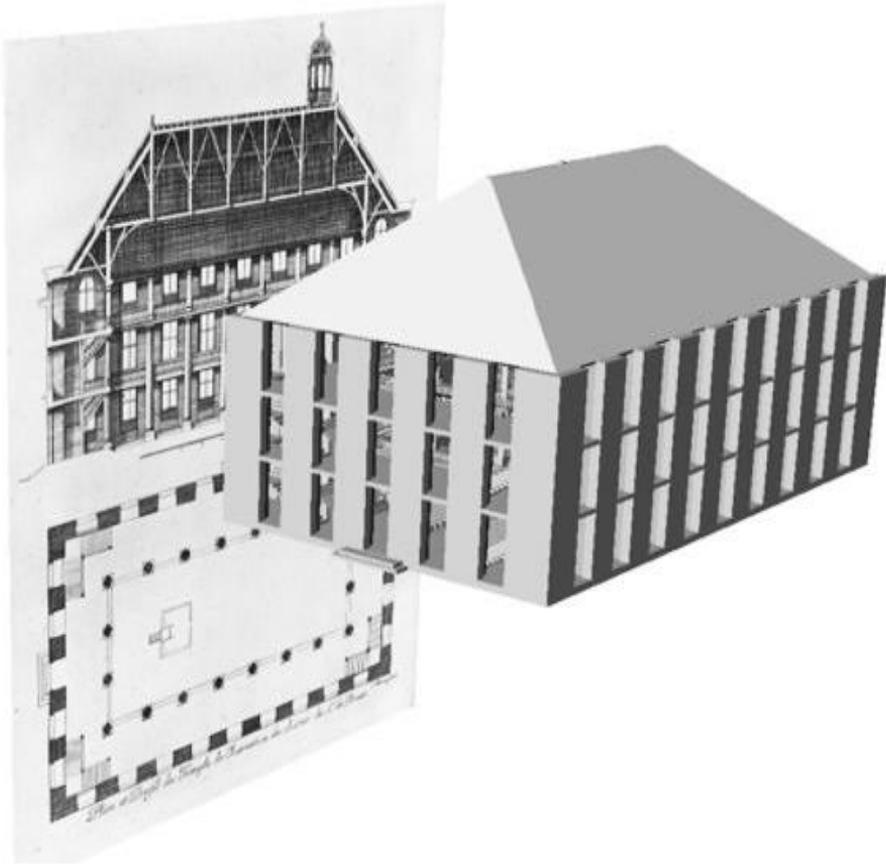


Fig. 36 Reconstruction of the Temple of Charenton.

The community then decided to save costs where they could began the construction of their second temple in less than five years. De Brosse perpetuated and yet altered his uncle's plan. He devised one, which was similar to the first but of far vaster proportions, seeking to

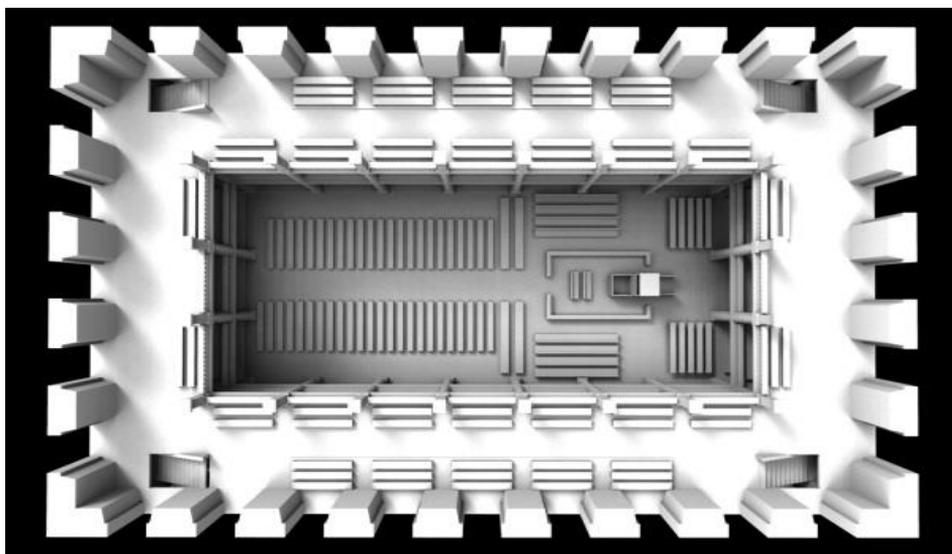


Fig. 37 Top view, Temple of Charenton.

accommodate as large a crowd as possible. It was unlikely a demonstration of ambition. Rather, it was a practical solution for a gathering of such enormous multitude of worshippers because the Edict strictly limited the number of places available for Huguenot worship.<sup>73</sup> The building was capable to accommodate more than three thousand people. The idea retained from the previous temple was to have “a centralized plan... [on] a grand rectangular design.”<sup>74</sup> De Brosse placed two galleries all around. He also altered the

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<sup>73</sup> Randall, *Building Codes*, 182.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

proportion of building, the stone columns raised up now to a two-floor height, connected with shorter ones, stressing on the verticality. In addition, the ground floor was lit by a new row of windows. Now all three floors were illuminated by large plain-glass windows (Fig.34, 35).

Someone has suggested that de Brosse's design alluded to the Vitruvian basilica at Fano.<sup>75</sup> However, what de Brosse consciously did was to create a new formal expression in nonconformity to the medieval longitudinal orientation.<sup>76</sup> An imposing freestanding pulpit was located in the end, but surrounded by a ring of pews at its feet. This arrangement forms a symbolic central position of the pulpit. Horizontal benches spread down the nave to the door and rows of benches occupied the aisles beneath the galleries (Fig.37).

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<sup>75</sup> There were 8 columns down each side and 4 across the end rising through 2 stories, staircases in similar positions to reach the gallery and crucially a side door in addition to the main entrances. See Rosalys Coope, *Salomon de Brosse and the Development of the Classical Style in French Architecture from 1565 to 1630* (London: A. Zwemmer, 1972), 185–186.

<sup>76</sup> Randall, *Building Codes*, 182; See also Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space*, 124.



Fig. 39 Pulpit surrounded by pews, Temple of Charenton.

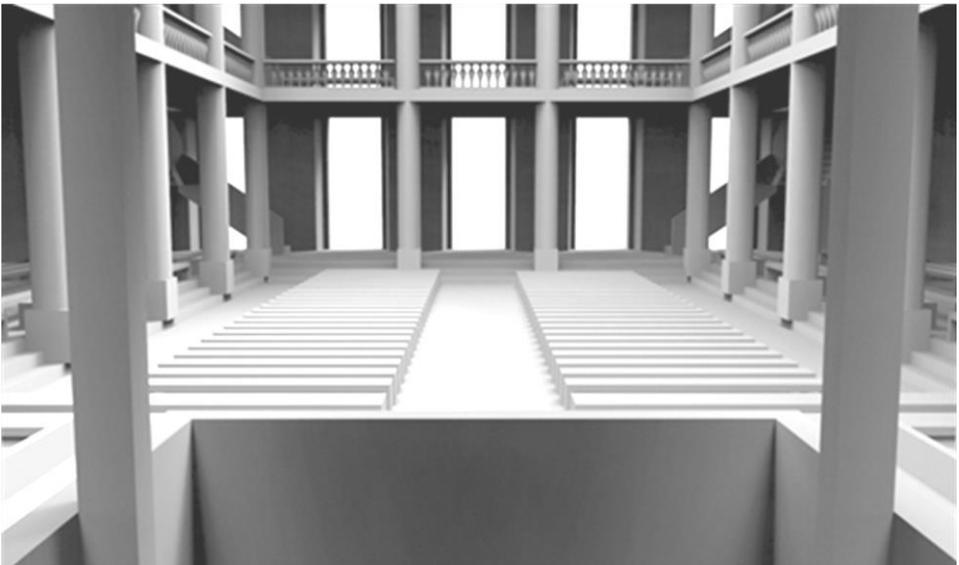


Fig. 38 View from pulpit to congregation, Temple of Charenton.

De Brosse's intentional arrangement of the central pulpit was captured by the contemporary artists. An illustration from seventeenth century depicts a scene of service in Charenton (Fig.40). In this illustration, the pulpit is elevated above the heads of the worshippers. Along with the preacher, it appears to be gigantic, drawn disproportionately larger in comparison to the rest of the room. The communion table again is not depicted. This artistic strategy for depicting the services became common in later years, for



Fig. 40 Illustration of the Service, Temple of Charenton (1648). Source from *Musée virtuel du protestantisme*.

despite widespread knowledge of perspective, artists wishing to signify the central position of the preaching did so by making the pulpit and preacher appear larger than others in the scene. Besides the drawings, some eye-witness accounts were recorded. A member of an Anglican Church, Evelyn, son-in-law of Ambassador Richard Brown, wrote of his visit on Sunday, March 6, 1644:

*“I went to Charenton, two leagues from Paris, to hear and see the manner of the French Protestant Church service. The place of meeting they call the Temple, a very fair and spacious room, built of freestone, very decently adorned with paintings of the Tables of the Law, the Lord's Prayer, and Creed. The pulpit stands at the upper end in the middle, having an enclosure of seats about it, where the Elders and persons of greatest quality and strangers, sit; the rest of the congregation on forms and low stools, but none in pews, as in our churches, to their great disgrace, as nothing so orderly, as here the stools and other cumber are removed when the assembly rises. I was greatly pleased with their harmonious singing the Psalms, which they all learn perfectly well, their children being as duly taught these, as*

*their catechism..."*<sup>77</sup>

Elie Brackenhoffer from Strasbourg also once visited the Charenton, he wrote about the building,

*"It is rectangular, oblong; it rests on twenty stone columns which are all around, with eight at the ends and six on each of the other sides. By contrast in the middle there are no columns but an open space which is free and clear, and the listeners have nothing before their eyes... All around there are two galleries, the one above the other, which are large and furnished with seats. The church has windows on four sides, it is very bright; there are three doors, from which one can leave from each side. It is all plasterwork, and there are no other ornaments, paintings and even less statues high in the vaults... Some painted panels, the one with the Ten Commandments and on the other Apostle's Creed and the Lord's Prayer. The pulpit is located at the far end, not far from the door, isolated so that one walks round it. The preacher can easily be heard by everyone..."*<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, vol.1, 55.

<sup>78</sup> Spicer, *Calvinist Churches in Early Modern Europe*, 198.

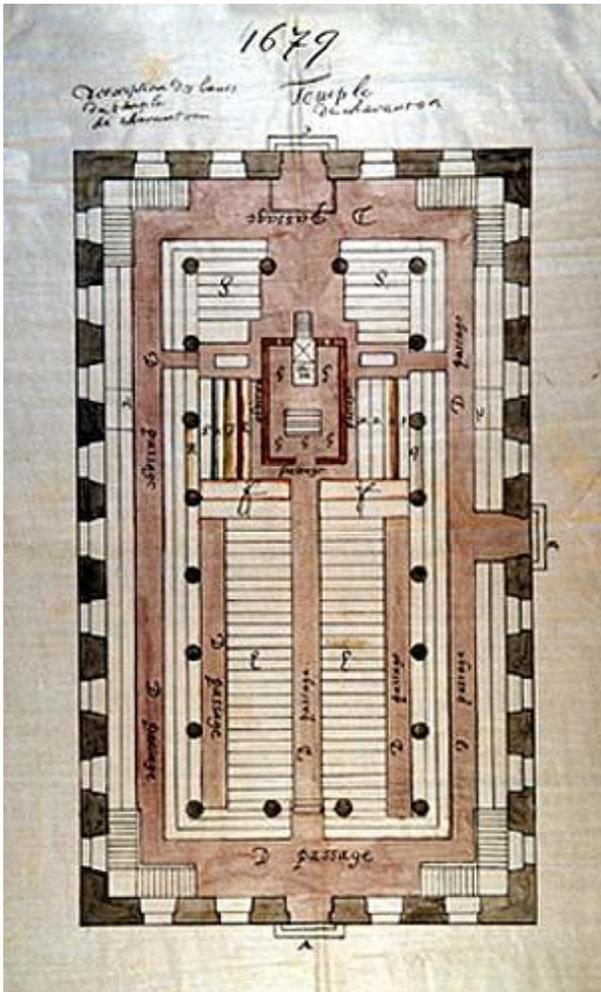


Fig. 41 Plan of seating arrangement, Temple of Charenton. Source from *Foundation Crommelin Family NL*.

In such a large auditorium room which can accommodate thousands of people, it was difficult to keep the order during the service. The seating arrangement was very necessary to help the participants settled as soon as possible. In regard to the seating, a more detailed plan and account of the seating arrangements was provided by the consistory in 1671 (Fig.41). The

arrangement in this plan coincides with the observation of Mr. Evelyn.



Fig. 42 View from the first-floor gallery to the ground floor, Temple of Charenton.

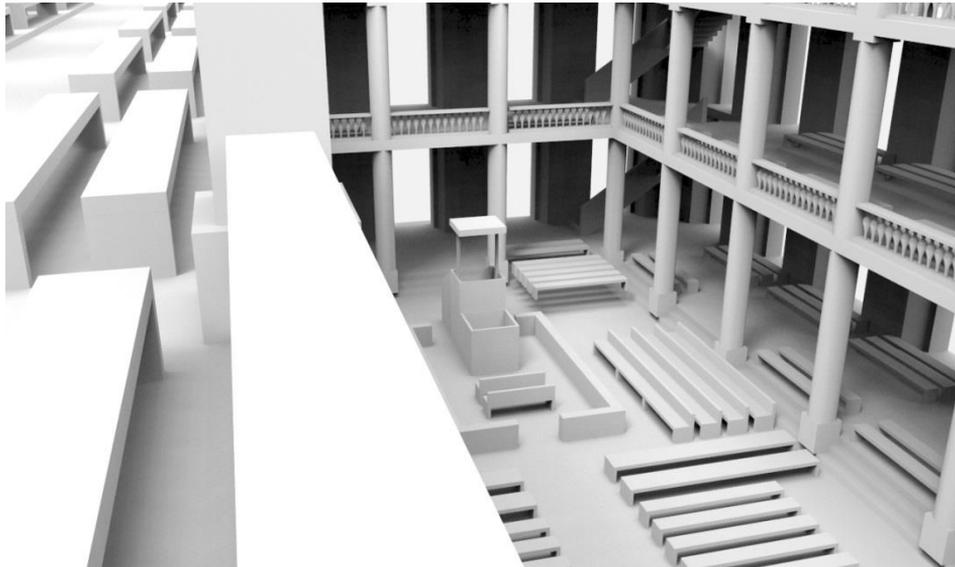


Fig. 43 View from the second-floor gallery to the ground floor, Temple of Charenton.

Like today, the designations of social power attached to the various seating areas were complex. An elaborate list of the benches arrangement is collected which gave specific information on who sat where.<sup>79</sup> Most of the benches were communal, so that congregants and visitors are encouraged to find a place by themselves. However, there were some places reserved for particular people. The enclosed part is called "Parquet", for it is covered by a wooden floor, where the seats are reserved for the ministers and elders. In the middle of the Parquet were two benches for those who were to be married and for the children who were to be baptized. All these benches were higher than the others. Around them were the benches for officials, foreign princes and ambassadors. At that time, there were seats particularly designated for the advisors in *the Parlement*, the ambassadors from Great Britain, Holland, the Swiss republic, and Germany. A large part of the congregation was nobility who were attending to the service along with the commoners. The benches at the rear of the two gallery floors were wider and higher which seemed to be a practical idea in

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<sup>79</sup> For the details of arrangement, more information on <http://www.crommelin.org/history/Ancestors/Charenton/Charenton-Benches/CharentonBenches.htm>

order to make it easier to see and hear the minister. Taking account of the size of the congregation, the seating arrangement was fairly effective. As Elie Brackenhoffer noted, “The preacher can easily be heard by everyone”. However, in such an enormous room, it is impossible for the minister to watch over the whole congregation (Fig.38, 42, 43). That is to say, maintaining the order in a service, which held thousands of people, mainly relied on the self-discipline of the congregation.

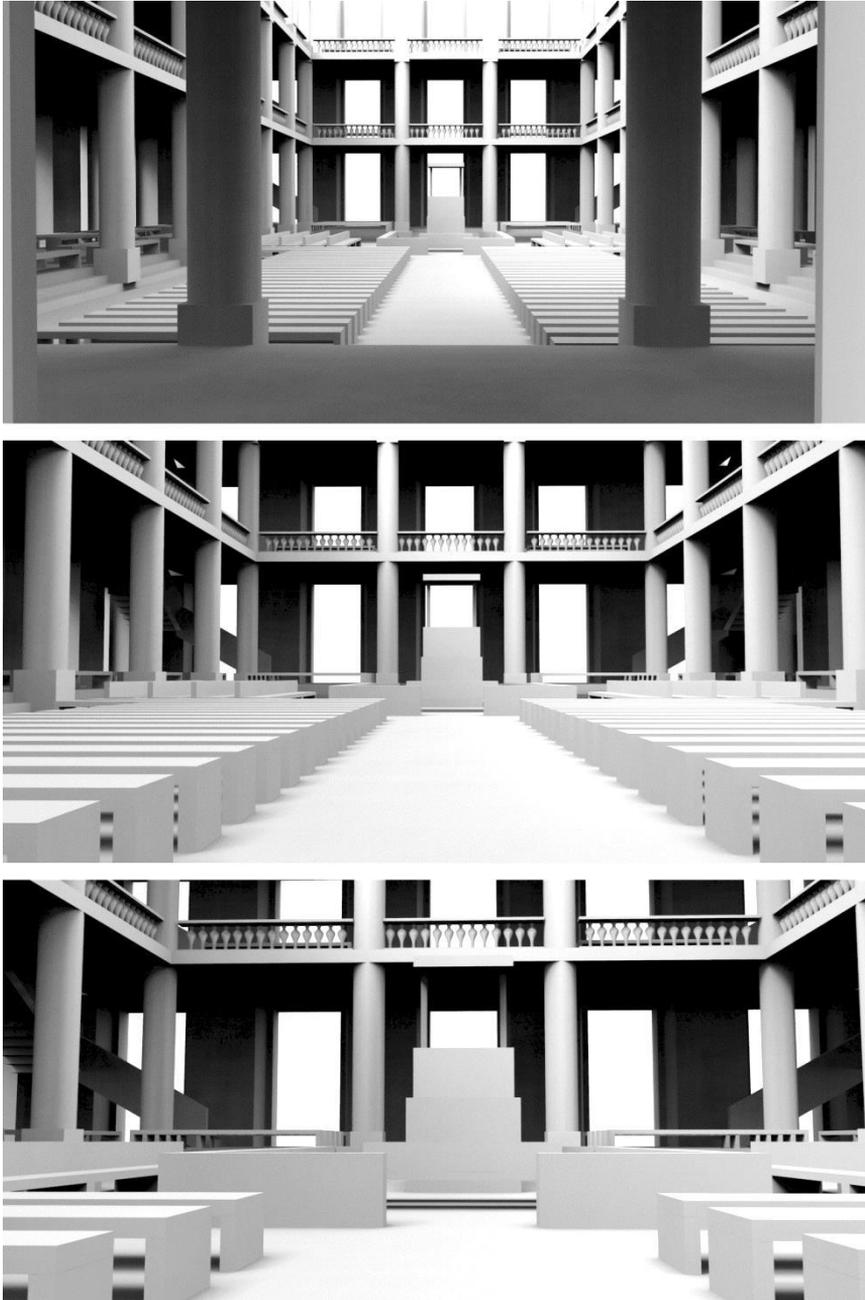


Fig. 44 Spatial sequence from entrance to pulpit.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we have learned that the Calvinistic liturgy is a liturgy of preached words which was based upon the concept of regulative principle. We have discussed the controversy of the Eucharist, the influence of “receptacle” theory of space in view of divine presence, and the difference between Zwingli’s doctrine of “real absence” and Calvin’s doctrine of “real but spiritual presence”. We have noticed that in spite of the high view of the sacraments, due to the issue of church discipline, in reality the sacrament of Lord’s Supper was not frequently administrated in Calvinistic churches. Preaching became the true central focus. Since the pulpit was regarded as the vehicle of divine communication, it was thoughtfully elaborated to heighten its visual appeal.

In a dialogical service, preaching was not merely dependent on the one-sided individual preacher’s ability to convince, but in the same time on the active participation of the congregation. The seating was arranged in such a way that not only the preacher was visible and audible to the congregation, but that the congregation could be

watched by the preacher to ensure that they were attentive and reverent.

Two Huguenot churches were chosen as case studies, namely, Le Paradis in Lyon, and the Temple of Charenton. They were two different structures in many ways. The former is circular, the latter is rectangular; former small, latter spacious; former plain, latter more ornate. The differences derived from the different period of time, different political contexts, and the different economic condition of the congregation. Whereas Le Paradis was built during slight period of reconciliation by a small group of Huguenots, the Temple of Charenton was designated by the Parisian community, which consisted of the members of noble rank. The nobility, officials, and ambassadors attended the services. Therefore there were indeed many differences between these two buildings. However, behind the contrasting appearances, they share many significant common points. Both of them have an appealing pulpit in the central end, surrounded by the congregational seating. The Communion table did not appear in either of the churches, indicating that the sacrament was not practiced frequently. They both had galleries to accommodate

congregation. Although in Charenton, the large space created the difficulty for the minister to supervise the congregation, the central focus of the pulpit is apparent. Fair to say, they were valuable heritages of Calvinistic churches.

## **Chapter three: The Aesthetics**

In the last chapter, we continued from the discussion on the “receptacle” theory of the space, and we briefly looked at its impact on the view of the Eucharist. After considering the different opinions on the issue, we concluded that because of the infrequency of the administration of the sacraments, preaching became the central element in the Calvinistic rituals. Calvinistic liturgy is a liturgy of the preached words. In this chapter, we will look at the aesthetics in the Calvinistic space. One thoughtful question that is to be reasonably asked is that if the Calvinistic liturgy is of words, not of sight, why it is necessary to concern about the aesthetics? A simple answer might be that Calvinism in fact is concerned about aesthetics because it has deep appreciation of beauty. Calvinism was not an enemy of beauty.

### **Calvin’s aesthetics and epistemology**

Calvin was well-known for his staunch opposition to the use of images in the worship. It is true that in his *Institutes*, he asserted, “We think it unlawful to give a visible shape to God, because God himself

has forbidden it, and because it cannot be done without, in some degree, tarnishing his glory...If it be unlawful to make any corporeal representation of God, still more unlawful must it be to worship such a representation instead of God, or to worship God in it....The majesty of God, which is far beyond the reach of any eye, must not be dishonored by unbecoming representations.”<sup>80</sup>

However, far from being opposed to all works of art, he affirmed that “I am not, however, so superstitious as to think that all visible representations of every kind are unlawful... sculpture and painting are gifts of God”, which “shall be used purely and lawfully... for his glory and our good”.<sup>81</sup> What Calvin concerned was the works of art “not be[ing] preposterously abused, nay, shall not be[ing] perverted to our destruction.”<sup>82</sup> In fact, Calvin wrote about art. He once claimed, “All the arts come from God”. Some suggest that the art system of Calvin is on three levels. At the top stands the work of God in creation and in redemption through Christ, which is regarded as the greatest artwork universally. Next in order comes the beauty of the created

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<sup>80</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, I:xi:12.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

nature, which constantly reflects the creative, providential glory of God. And the lowest level is the art which merely made for man's enjoyment, and does not reflect God's glory, or put it in another way, the art for art's sake.<sup>83</sup> In this category, for instance, Calvin included the art of royal pomp. What he applauded was the art of simplicity, order, and harmony which manifest the created cosmos.<sup>84</sup>

To understand Calvinistic aesthetics, we need to put it back into the whole picture of Calvin's epistemology, or more specifically the doctrine of the knowledge of God, wherein he affirms strongly the transcendence of God. Calvin affirmed in his *Institutes*, "His [God's] essence, indeed, is incomprehensible, utterly transcending all human thought."<sup>85</sup> Man should not "speculate" about God's essence. But, if man is unable to comprehend God's essence, what is the knowledge of God can man possibly obtain? In which way can man know God? Calvin answered that it is through his works that man is able to know God. These works consist of creation, providence, and redemption.

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<sup>83</sup> Leslie P. Spelman, "Calvin and the Arts," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 6, no. 3 (March 1948): 246.

<sup>84</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, I:v:1.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

Calvin wrote, "On each of his works his glory is engraved in characters so bright, so distinct, and so illustrious, that none, however dull and illiterate, can plead ignorance as their excuse... because the glory of his power and wisdom is more refulgent in the firmament, it is frequently designated as his palace. And, first, wherever you turn your eyes, there is no portion of the world, however minute, that does not exhibit at least some sparks of beauty; while it is impossible to contemplate the vast and beautiful fabric as it extends around, without being overwhelmed by the immense weight of glory."<sup>86</sup> Here Calvin focused on the work of creation, but it is certainly applicable to the providential work. Although Calvin affirmed the transcendence of God, he rejected the notion of a distant God, who is not actively involved in his creation. In contrast, Calvin emphasized on God's immanent continual government over creation, so that God is a transcendental and immanent God; a God who is totally distinct from his creation, yet immanently involved in it throughout history.<sup>87</sup> Besides the creative/providential works, Calvin affirmed that a more intimate knowledge of God comes from the works of redemption.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., I:v.

Calvin argued that because of the Fall of Man, the knowledge of God in creation is of no avail without faith in Christ. “All that knowledge of God the Creator...would be useless, [if] not followed up by faith, holding forth God to us as a Father in Christ.” “No knowledge of God without a Mediator was effectual to salvation”.<sup>88</sup>

## **Light and color**

Having taken account of Calvin’s epistemological notion of transcendence and immanence of God, now we return to the aesthetics. In Calvinistic churches, a specific way to embody the transcendence of God is the use of natural bright light. As we can see from his *Institutes*, Calvin used many terms relative to “light” to describe the works of creation, such as, bright, glory, refulgent, firmament, *et cetera*. In fact, Calvin often used the metaphor of light to describe God and his work. A historian suggested that Calvin was probably thinking that light was the only adequate symbol for God, because it is “uncircumscribed”, which means that it cannot be

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., II:vi:1.

confined.<sup>89</sup> A feature in most Calvinistic churches which is often associated with this aspect of Calvin's aesthetics is the use of the large clear glass windows. To differ from the "dim religious light" and "aura of mystery",<sup>90</sup> the Calvinistic interior space is easily distinguishable by its brightness and clarity. A good example is the Temple of Charenton which we considered in chapter two. De Brosse's inspiring use of the large clear windows on the ground floor impressed many visitors at that time. Practically speaking, the light was helpful for the service. In Calvinistic services, the congregation is required to read a portion of the Bible together with the minister, and to be attentive to the preaching, looking at the preacher. Without light, this is impossible to be done. The minister should watch over the congregation, which is achievable only in a bright room. Another practical reason is that it was important for the new emerged Reformed churches to communicate that they were a different type of church, and the use of light and clear glass windows would be a tangible way of doing this.<sup>91</sup> Nonetheless, the symbolic meaning of

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<sup>89</sup> Joby, *Calvinism and the Arts*, 161.

<sup>90</sup> Richard Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone: Church Architecture From Byzantium to Berkeley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 107.

<sup>91</sup> Joby, *Calvinism and the Arts*, 161.

such practice is significant. As we mentioned above, for Calvin, the most sublime art and beauty is that which reflects the transcendental glory of God. In Calvin's writing, the transcendence of God is so much associated with the idea of light. He once quoted the Psalmist, saying, "He [God] covereth himself with light as with a garment".<sup>92</sup> The use of light allows the worshippers to remember that they are to live *Coram Deo* (i.e. "in the presence of God"), and to embrace Christ in whom "full brightness of his [God's] glory is manifested".<sup>93</sup>

The use of light often combined with the use of colors. The use of colors in Calvinistic churches was equally deliberate to cultivate an atmosphere of "devout stillness", in which everything is bound together in perfect harmony. The color "brown" which came largely from the wooden furnishings, contrasted with the striking golden colors, achieved an austere aesthetic without being ostentatious. White, as a "non-color", dematerialized the stone or brick walls, lifted the worshippers to a spiritual reality, and fostered a Calvinistic virtue of piousness and devoutness.

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<sup>92</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, I:v:1.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, II:ii:20.

## **Case study: Calvinistic churches in Dutch Republic**

The history of Dutch Reformation consists of a series of political struggles against the King Philip II of Spain who was then ruling over the Low Countries during the second half of the sixteenth century. From 1550s, Calvinism was present in the southern provinces where some French-speaking pastors were active. Some formal congregations were established mostly in the Walloon towns. Soon, the Reformed movement spread throughout the whole of the Low Countries. As happened in many other countries, the Dutch Calvinists encountered severe persecution. In the end, the severe persecution of Protestants and high taxes eventually induced Revolt. The Prince of Orange, William the Silent (1533-84) led this Revolt.

In the face of Spanish military advances, the Union of Utrecht was formed by Northern provinces in 1579, which declared a Republic of United Provinces in 1588. They defined a new religious policy that “each individual enjoys freedom of religion and no one is persecuted or questioned about his religion.”<sup>94</sup> Consequently, Reformed

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<sup>94</sup> During the revolt in the Netherlands, the 'rebels' developed for the first time in modern

communities gained the rights to gather for worship within the territory of the United Provinces and gradually became the strongest religion. With this relatively ensured stability, the Reformed communities began to search for the forms which met the specific requirements of the new faith.

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history political philosophies that had a decisive impact on political reality. They influenced the course of events which led in fact to the creation of a new state. See *Texts Concerning the Revolt of the Netherlands* (Cambridge University Press, 1974), 169–70.

## Koepelkerk, Willemstad (1596-1607)



Fig. 45 Willemstad, Holland.

The first church erected for Reformed worship in the United Provinces was the Koepelkerk at Willemstad. As early as 1583, a series of garrisons were established in north-west Brabant to meet the threat of the Spanish armies, one of these fortifications became the town of Willemstad (Fig.45). Later, Maurice of Nassau, who succeeded his father, William the Silent, as the *Stadtholder* of Holland

and Zeeland, paid to build a temporary place for Reformed worship. In 1594, they decided to build a church in the town. Another donation in his name was paid to prompt the construction which started on November, 1596. However it was not until 1602 that the construction



Fig. 46 Koepelkerk, Willemstad.

of the walls began, since Willemstad as a garrison town was greatly involved into the wars. The construction of the tower on the south west side led to many problems, and therefore was not completed in the end. The building itself was completed on August, 1607. After the

furniture was transferred inside, the building began to be in use, though two pieces of windows were not glazed and plugged by reeds provisionally.

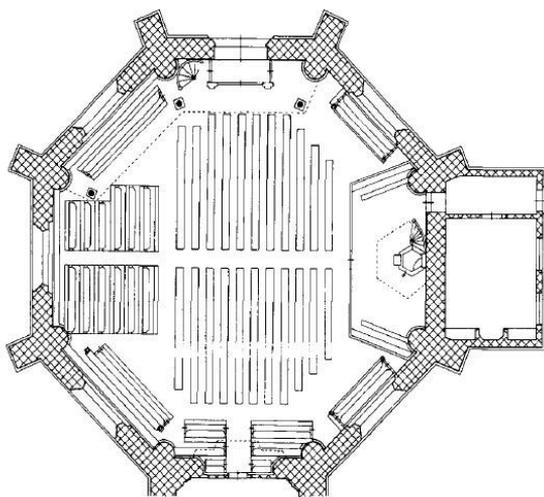


Fig. 47 Willemstad plan, 1597. Source from *T. Brouwer, RDMZ*.

Now, let us take a look at this building. It was designed in an octagonal plan, which became an ideal plan for Reformed churches (Fig.47). The geometry of an octagon was a common shape for church buildings, particularly for baptisteries since the early Christian times. This

can be seen in the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna, or the notable Battistero di San Giovanni in front of the Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence. Moreover, the number eight was considered as a symbol of Regeneration.

Nonetheless, the form of this church was possibly determined by the request of Maurice of Nassau that “the church at Willemstad should be built in round or octagonal form.”<sup>95</sup> This was probably true, because in the United Provinces, the Reformed church, although a public church, lacked authority over the patrons and magistrates. There was no requirement for the *kerkmeesters* who were responsible for finances to be church members until 1654.<sup>96</sup> Some note that the layout of Maurice’s gardens was also influenced by the same geometry.<sup>97</sup> Nonetheless, it does not deny the symbolic meaning of the shape, for the centralized plan has a long history as an ideal form for worship. The church was built accordingly as a centralized building in an octagonal plan, and it became a significant model for the later Calvinistic church buildings. There was no division in the space. The entire interior space was united as one with no columns hampering the view towards the pulpit. The homogeneity of the space is articulately emphasized, so was the communal sensation of

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<sup>95</sup> Spicer, *Calvinist Churches in Early Modern Europe*, 134.

<sup>96</sup> Andrew Spicer, “Iconoclasm and Adaptation: The Reformation of the Churches in Scotland and the Netherlands,” in *The Archaeology of the Reformation, 1480–1580*, ed. David Gaimster and Roberta Gilchrist (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2003), 36.

<sup>97</sup> Joby, *Calvinism and the Arts*, 138.

Reformed worship. The pulpit, with the sounding board overhead, was placed on the north-east side. The seating oriented consequently to this side, indicating once again that the pulpit was the central focus. Although there was no design for galleries, but the Reformed dialogical dynamism in the room is strongly accentuated. The benches were arranged closely fronting onto the pulpit, from where the minister was able to watch over the entire congregation. The ribbed ceiling supported by the round pilasters, provided a soaring space, which created an aura of solemnness and devoutness, and yet caused no long reverberation to confuse the preaching. What was appealing was the captivating lightness of the room. Six large semi-circular arched windows were glazed on each side of the building. The whole interior walls were plastered in pure white, forming a space of austereness, simplicity and purity (Fig.48, 49, 50). In such a way, the entire room was illuminated so bright that it was very easy to distinguish itself from most of the medieval churches with the dimly mysterious light. Although this small garrison church building is less known, its influence is easy to be found in many other buildings in the following years.



Fig. 48 Interior view of Willemstad kerk. Source form *Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed*, i.e. Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands.



Fig. 49 Interior view to pulpit, Koepelkerk, Willemstad. Source from *Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed*.



Fig. 50 Interior view to organ, Koepelkerk, Willemstad. Source from *Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed*.

## Westerkerk, Amsterdam, (1620-31)



Fig. 51 View of Westerkerk, by Jan van der Heyden, c.1665-1670

Amsterdam, as one of the most significant towns in the United Provinces, had expanded dramatically in the following decades after its independence. The cease of military conflicts, the removal of the economic load and also the large-scale refugee migration boosted the population in the town. The 30,000 people in 1570 became doubled

to 60,000 by 1600 and reached 105,000 by 1622.<sup>98</sup> Such rapid population growth implied the increasing demand for religious spaces. Some former church buildings were refurnished for the Reformed worship which provided a temporary solution. During the years of Truce the Amsterdam authorities undertook three new building projects: the Zuiderkerk, the Noorderkerk, and the Westerkerk. All three were commissioned to a foremost sculptor and architect Hendrik de Keyser, the latter two were completed by his son Pieter after Hendrik's death in 1621. One of these three church buildings, Westerkerk, has been selected as our last case study (Fig.51, 52).

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<sup>98</sup> J. I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477-1806* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 329.



Fig. 52 East façade, Westerkerk, Amsterdam.



Fig. 53 Westerkerk, Amsterdam.

Building Began in 1620 and finished in 1631, Westerkerk is one of the best preserved, largest, and best-known of early Protestant churches. It is the largest Protestant church built in Europe before Wren's St. Paul's.<sup>99</sup> In some respects similar to the medieval churches that preceded it, Westerkerk “represents surprisingly the culmination and

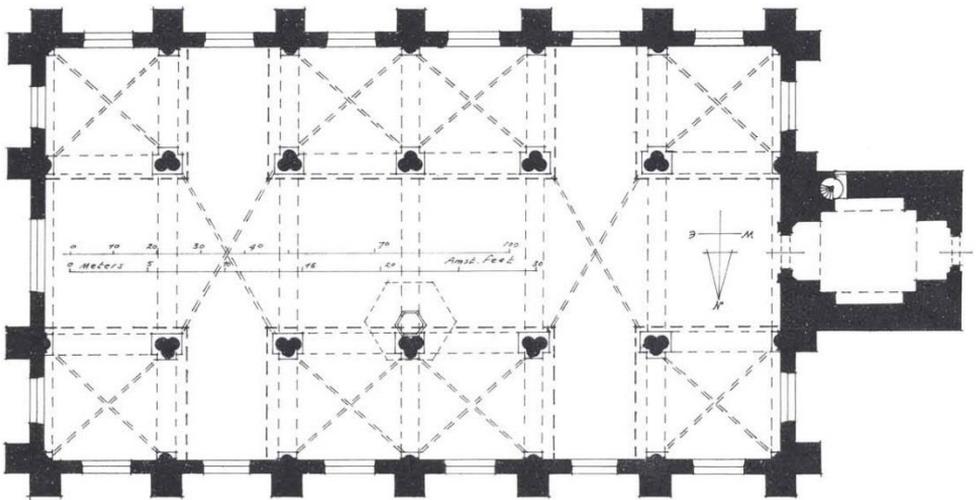


Fig. 54 Plan of Westerkerk, Amsterdam. Source from *Architectura Moderna*.

conclusion of mediaeval church building” with nave, transepts, and west-frontal tower all reminiscent of Gothic design. The exterior appearance was of a sturdy Northern Mannerism. Thirty-six large clear-glass windows with semi-circular arched frames inserted into

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<sup>99</sup> W. Kuyper, *Dutch Classicist Architecture: A Survey of Dutch Architecture, Gardens, and Anglo-Dutch Relations from 1625 to 1700* (Delft U.P., 1980), 10.

the façades. Buttresses are disguised as heavy ionic pilasters carrying an entablature, on top of which is placed a second entablature

consisting of a giant triglyph surmounted by a cornice with a vase on the top (Fig.53, 55).<sup>100</sup>

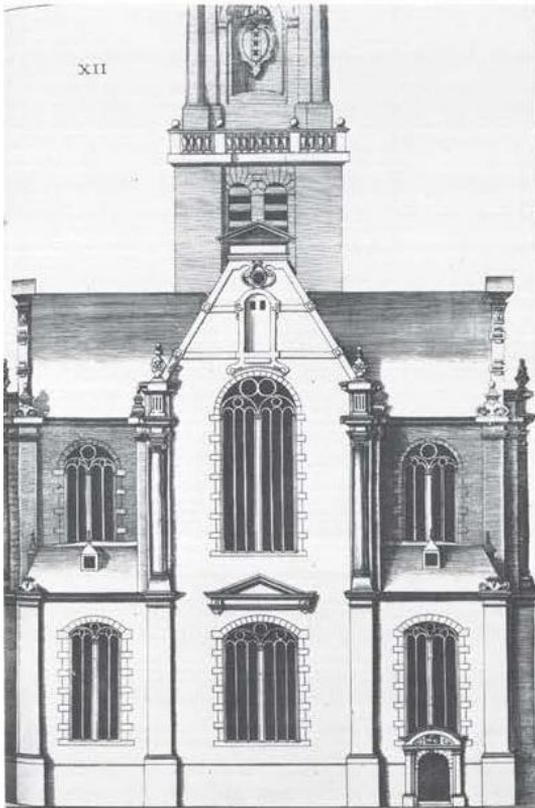


Fig. 55 East façade, Westerkerk, Amsterdam.

Source from *Architectura Moderna*.

The plan of the church is an elongated rectangle, running west to east (Fig.54). The longitudinal axis was emphasized, particularly by the large east windows opposite the closed west wall of the nave. Nonetheless, Westerkerk differs in many ways from a traditional

medieval church. At ground level, the pillars are slender, and the

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<sup>100</sup> Ronald Stenvert et al., *Monumenten in Nederland. Noord-Holland*. (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2006), 116.

demarcation of aisles was less pronounced than in most medieval churches, leaving a clearer sense of a single and unified rectangular space. Furthermore, while the space is a long rectangle like Temple of Charenton, it is used not longitudinally but transversally towards the pulpit installed on the middle pilaster of the north side. It is a very typical arrangement in many Dutch Calvinistic churches, which can be seen with St. Bavo kerk in Haarlem after alteration, Oude Kerk in Amsterdam, Nieuwe Kerk in Haarlem and so forth. The space is made extremely intriguing by the two transverse axes of the narrow transepts. The room is very bright. Windows are opened also on the ground floor which recalls de Brosse's innovation in Charenton. At the upper level the design is more complex: the second and fifth bay of each aisle rises higher than the other bays, making for transepts at either end and giving the upper part of the interior visual interest while preserving the relative simplicity of the ground level (Fig.56).



Fig. 56 Interior view of Westerkerk. Source from *Monumenten fotografie, Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, afdeling Gebouwd Erfgoed*.



Fig. 57 Pulpit, Westerkerk, Amsterdam.

The furnishing of the Westerkerk had a typical Calvinistic arrangement. The pulpit, being placed in front of the central pilaster on the north side, with its bold sounding board installed overhead, was articulately declaring its prominence as the focal point of the whole space (Fig.57). Everything was planned to make this clear. Ironically, the organ installed at the west end of the church later in the 1680s is a more imposing structure than the pulpit (Fig.56, 59). Its

bejeweled decoration draws attention to itself more powerfully than this modest wooden pulpit for the visitors, but the priority of the pulpit is nonetheless clarified boldly by its frequency and the seating arrangement during the service.

Originally the pulpit was enclosed by a railing that defined the baptismal space and simultaneously reinforced the centrality of the pulpit itself. The table for the Lord's Supper stood in front of the pulpit (Fig.56). The pulpit was crafted well. Taking a close look at it, we can see Greek columns carved on each corner of this hexagonal pulpit. There are some wood-carving on the staircase. But together with the sounding board, this pulpit is fairly plain and modest, retaining in overall harmony with the whole room. Most of the congregation sat on chairs; box pews for the magistrates were built around the pillars on the south side, facing the pulpit. The pew on the pillar directly across from the pulpit was for the mayor, who had a special side entrance on the wall behind this pew. The gallery added in 1685 at the east end was not in de Keyser's design. Although we have discussed in chapter two that it was commonly believed that galleries were helpful to provide more accommodation close to the



Fig. 58 A recent interior view of Westerkerk.

pulpit, but this was not necessary for de Keyser.

Although Westerkerk was designed in a Mannerist adaptation of classical style, compared with De Keyser's early years work, it looked much more restrained and modest. While the side aisles have cross-ribbed stone

vaults, a plain wooden barrel vault covers the central space. White plastered walls with exposed gray stone, attached by the dark wooden furnishings, as a whole, promote a solemnly devotional space. Then, when the sunlight shines upon the thirty-six large windows, the bright light through these clear pieces of glass, floods abundantly into

the entire room (Fig.58). The light manifests not only the transcendental glory of God, but the joy that flows out from the fountain of divine love, revealed in his providential and redemptive works.



Fig. 59 Pulpit and Organ, Westerkerk, Amsterdam. Source from *ANP Historisch Archief*.



Fig. 60 Royal wedding, Westerkerk, Amsterdam. Source from *ANP Historisch Archief*.



Fig. 62 Town Hall meeting, Westerkerk, Amsterdam.



Fig. 61 Alternative arrangement, Westerkerk, Amsterdam.



Fig. 63 Westerkerk, Amsterdam.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter three, we have focused on aesthetics within the framework of Calvin's epistemology. We have pointed out Calvin's classification of art, his constant insistence of the transcendence of God, but meanwhile emphasizing the intimate relationship found in the works of providence and particularly in the works of redemption. While he condemned the art that pursues mere delight and enjoyment, he exalted the art of simplicity, order, and harmony which can reflect the created cosmos. Associating with this aesthetics, natural light was introduced as an important decoration in Calvinistic churches. In Calvin's writing, the light is often used as metaphor to describe God's works, for it is illimitable. In these two exemplary Dutch Reformed churches, we have seen this unostentatious aesthetics manifested through the use of large clear glass windows, and the white/brown color combination.

## In the End

Coming to the end of our journey, let us recapitulate the features of space in the Calvinistic minds, and space in the Calvinistic hands, and analyze horizontally the building history and context in the case studies we have chosen.

At the beginning, in chapter one, we introduced Calvin's understanding of space in relation with God, which contrasts to the "receptacle" theory of space. The transcendence of God dominated his mind, and being combined with his ontology of church, the worship space is desacralized in Calvin's understanding. The appearance of church buildings was regarded as *adiaphora*, a matter of indifference. The worship space therefore was homogenous. Calvinistic ritual is characterized by preaching. The dynamism in Calvinistic services is verbal and dialogical, wherein the congregation is to participate and be actively involved in the service, to respond to the intelligible words preached by the minister on behalf of God. As an example, we have seen the transformation of St. Pierre Cathedral in Geneva. The disappearance of spatial division and the white plastered walls

manifested the neutral and homogeneous space for worship. The re-positioning of the pulpit which was proximately encircled by the newly installed congregational seating demonstrated the dialogical dynamism in the room. Following the discussion of liturgy, we came to the second chapter, where we discussed in a fuller way the features of Calvinistic liturgy with preaching as its central focus. We found that the impact of the “receptacle” theory of space is also in the liturgy, especially in the sacraments. We briefly introduced Calvin’s view of the “real but spiritual presence” of God in the sacrament, which indicated that Calvin did not despise the sacrament. The reason why preaching became the center of the weekly service, was because of the low frequency of the administration of the sacrament. Congregational seating was an innovation in Calvinistic churches, for the recent need of being attentive in long sermons. In many churches, galleries were installed to enlarge the accommodation of the room. Two French Calvinistic churches were chosen to illustrate these features: Temple of Paradis in Lyon, and the Temple of Charenton. Finally, we discussed Calvin’s aesthetics in the framework of his epistemology. We saw again the emphasis of the transcendence of God. But this time, Calvin also stressed the immanence of God

manifested in the continual providence and especially in redemption. In his writings, the metaphor of light was frequently used to describe God's works. The light and clear glass windows thereby became an explicit feature in Calvinistic churches. As we examined in two Dutch Reformed churches, namely Koepelkerk in Willemstad, and Westerkerk in Amsterdam, we found the preference of large clear glass. The bright interior space symbolized the presence of the transcendental God, celebrated the joy in the "true light" of the Redeemer.

In addition, I want to point out the building context. My intention is to maintain a conscious recognition of the historical reality in the discussion of the relation between ideology and practice. The realization of ideas in architectural practices is never straightforward. Buildings were made in diverse conditions and circumstances. What happened in Geneva was different from what happened in France and in Holland. Even in the same country, at different times, with different people different results can be seen. Generally speaking, in France, the Huguenots were under suppression which still existed in the reconciliation time. In contrast, the Dutch Reformed churches became

the dominant religion in the United Provinces. Consequently, whereas the new built Dutch Reformed churches were donated by the authorities, the construction of the French Calvinistic churches was exclusively funded by the local congregations. We can clearly see this difference in our case studies. the Temple of Paradis, though the congregation contributed a decorous pulpit, the exposed wooden structure told us the straits where the Huguenots were in during the wars. Even after the Edict, even for the noble Parisian congregation, the first Charenton Temple was demolished by the mobs. Nevertheless, for the Parisian congregation, they had much more foreign supports. We have mentioned that there were seats reserved for the ambassadors from the Protestant countries, such as Britain, Germany, and Holland and so on. It indicated that these countries had a close relationship with Charenton. Many famous royal architects were members of the congregation. So we see the Charenton Temple was much more decent in many aspects: enormous space, solid structures, classical pilasters, the materials, the decorations, etc.

Looking at those two Dutch buildings, we also find differences. The one in Willemstad, a small garrison town, is apparently smaller, and

with less decoration. Westerkerk as a significant part of the city expansion was ornately designed. Neither of them had galleries, because the interior space was wide. As we have seen in Charenton, from the pulpit the minister had difficulties in seeing the people in the galleries. Though gallery is a typical element in Calvinistic churches, and some may argue its formal emphasis on the centralization of the pulpit, I would suggest that in the light of dialogical dynamism, the gallery would leave the worshippers beyond the supervision of the minister, rendering them superfluous.

The ideas in mind bring the ideas in hand. The ideas of John Calvin changed the idea of church architecture. This concise work is merely a small taste of the Calvinistic architecture in history. More needs to be explored.

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