



CENTENARY LECTURE

THE REFORMED WORSHIP BUILDINGS: ARCHITECTURAL AND THEOLOGICAL MEANINGS

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Firstly, some introductory remarks:

1 For the purposes of this paper, I would like to concentrate our attention on reformed or Presbyterian Church Architecture alone, and not on Christian Architecture, throughout the centuries. When I was confronted by the same problem in Marburg, Germany, a Lutheran scholar said to me: "Your presentation has convinced me, that there is a reformed culture and that reformed church buildings are an important part of such a reformed civilisation". As reformed Presbyterian theologians, we are not enough at one with that aspect of the "reformed Reformation"¹. I hope that my presentation may help

¹ Concerning the phrase "reformed Reformation" that expression is not a translation of a French phrase. Professor Reymond uses it to make clear the distinction between the Lutheran and the "reformed Reformation". The usual expression is "Calvinist Reformation" but many reformed people are not "Calvinist", for example in Switzerland they are Zwinglian. Professor Reymond prefers the expression "reformed Reformation" (or "presbyterian Reformation" - but until the end of the 18th century, the Swiss Churches *except* the Church of Geneva, were reformed in their doctrine but not yet presbyterian in their organisation).



us to become more sensitive to that dimension of the reformed faith.

2

A Church architecture is interesting for theologians as well as for architects, because it combines inseparably two constitutive elements of architecture. The first element is the church building as a utilitarian instrument for the gathering of a worshipping congregation, or in the words of the Swiss architect Le Corbusier, the church building as "machine à habiter" - the church as a "housing machine" or as a "worshipping machine".

B The second element is the church building as a church, namely as a symbol of the Christian faith - as a visual representation of the reformed faith. Many architects say that for them, the most interesting side of conceiving a new church building is exactly that combination of the church as a utilitarian instrument and the building as a symbol. But I think that it is also a constitutive problem for practical theology: one of the most interesting sides of practical theology is that it must always deal with factual realities and with the symbolic side of those realities. Frequenting church architecture is, of course, a good exercise for practical theology.



3 As is well known, Reformed people have a problem with the visual aspects of their own faith. It is often said, for example, that the reformed faith should not be sensitive to the visible side of piety. Or that there is nothing to be seen in reformed churches. It is not true. I ask you to remember:

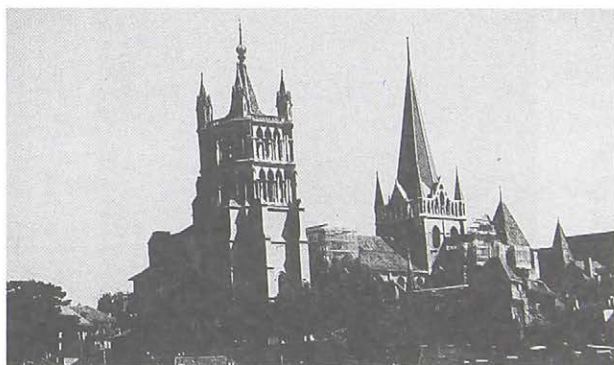
1 That Presbyterian church buildings are actually visible;

2 That in the 16th Century visual changes happened in the mediaeval churches which were used for the reformed worship, and

3 That those visual changes were important means to make the aims of the Reformation understandable to ordinary people.

Consequently, I am convinced that church architecture is, today, still a means of communicating or making more obvious some incidences of the reformed faith.

Now, let us move to the main topic of my paper:



1. Lausanne Cathedral



For French or Italian people, who are living in a country characterised by a prevailing Roman Catholic tradition, it is always astonishing that so many cathedrals in Scotland, the Netherlands or in Switzerland are used for Reformed worship and not for the Catholic Mass. Here is a picture of the cathedral of my own city, Lausanne. The same is also true for many mediaeval village churches. I think it is an important sign, firstly for our time, that the Reformation is not merely a breaking of continuity with the former Church, nor the foundation of a new church, but really a reformation of the existing Christian Church. The reformed use of mediaeval church buildings is, even today, a sign of continuity, as is the reading of the Bible a convincing symbol of the same continuity.



2. Lausanne Cathedral: an ordination service in 1935

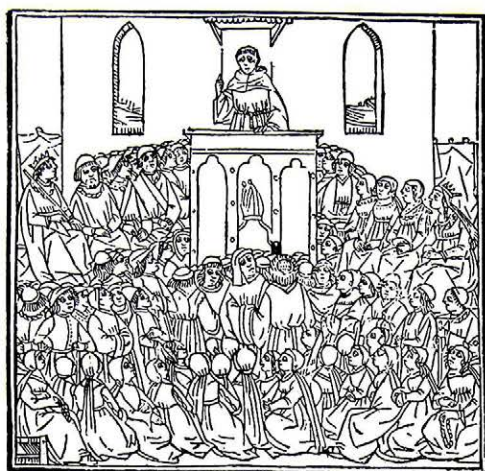


Continuity, but with a factor of discontinuity. Here is the same cathedral ordered for the Act of Worship for the ordination of new ministers in 1935, before the recent reorganisation of the inner space according to the taste of the Liturgical High Church movement. Two elements of that former view are noticeable:

- 1 The choir is not used, and
- 2 The congregation is assembled around the pulpit and around the place where the ordination itself happens.

In comparison with the usual organisation of a Catholic Cathedral, those two marks of change show how the Presbyterian reformation was keen, enterprising and audacious, even in the reshaping of church buildings.

Continuity and discontinuity. But has the discontinuity been as innovative as reformed thinkers may wish to assert it? An architectural historian once made me aware of the fact that in architecture, there is no real innovation, only significant changes in the use of architectural languages, which are already known. We may make the same observation for theological matters. The same remark is valid concerning the reformed reorganisation of the inner room of mediaeval churches.



3. "Prediche vulghare", Firenze, 1491

This is an interesting representation of a preaching service in an Italian mediaeval church of the 15th Century. As usual in the furnishing of mediaeval churches, the pulpit is close to a pillar at the mid-length of the nave, and the listening congregation is seated round the preacher. It is more or less the same arrangement we saw at the ordination service at Lausanne Cathedral in 1935. In that sense, in grouping the congregation around the pulpit, the reformed reformation did not invent anything new, but has revised for all the services an arrangement which was used primarily for the normal sermon alone. So, I think I am allowed to assert, that the new reformed congregation was not all that much surprised to find itself gathered round the pulpit. Much more of an impression would have



been made on the people of that time by the exclusion of the plethora of altars which were in the churches, and of all the carved images, which were near them.

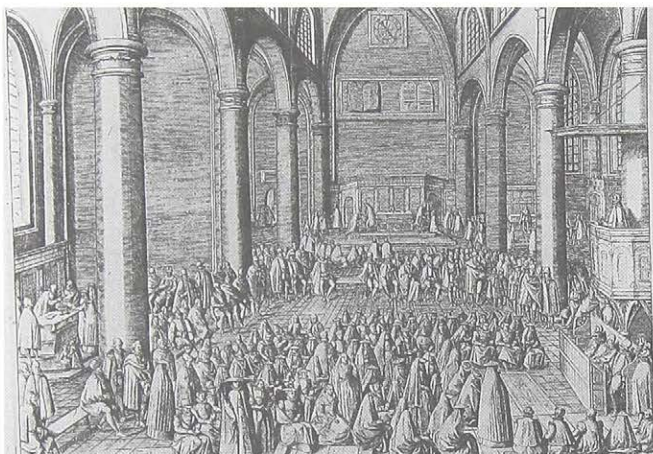


4. "Vera imago Ecclesiae papisticae", Germany, about 1600

1 Today, we often speak of churches as places of worship, in the sense that each church is one place of worship. Since the Second Vatican Council introduced the concelebration of the Eucharist, Catholic people have now the same feeling: for them, a church is one place of worship too. But the image of a church at the beginning of the 16th Century was quite different: for people then, a church, and especially a cathedral, was a building with a plurality of worshipping



places. This is a polemic image of the first years of the 17th Century, which was broadcast by the Lutherans to criticise the Catholic use of church buildings. It is obvious that the critics were aiming firstly at the multiplicity and then the simultaneousness of liturgical actions at one and the same time and in the same church.



5. "Vera imago Ecclesiae apostolicae", *ibid*

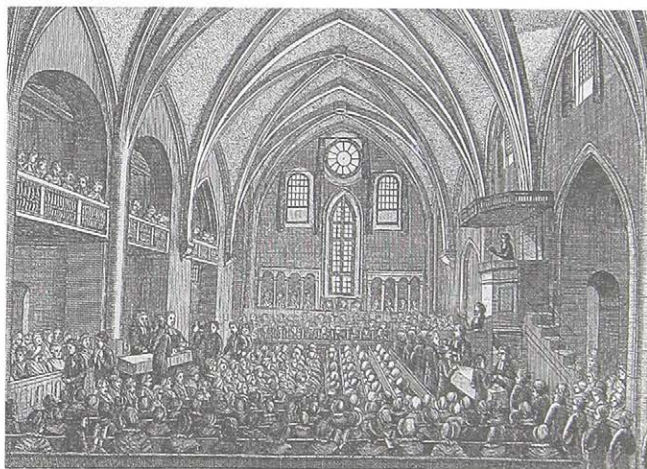
The second part of the same polemic image represents, on the contrary, the Protestant concept of a church building: the uniqueness of only one liturgical act in the same building has replaced the former multiplicity of the Catholic practice of that time.

I think that uniqueness is one of the most significant marks of the Protestant concept of worship and consequently of Protestant church



architecture in the 16th Century. When a congregation gathers for worship, they are one and the same people of God gathering at the same place and the same time for the one unique act of worship. Such a theological and liturgical meaning has, of necessity, architectural consequences, the first, the fact that it is no longer suitable to have two separate places, as there would be in mediaeval churches, namely the sacerdotal space of the choir and the lay space of the nave. The Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of all believers implies indeed that the whole worship space is either a lay space or a sacerdotal space.

As a matter of fact, the mediaeval churches, which were reordered for reformed worship, belong to (or did belong until the High Church restoration movement) to that unifying concept.



6. Temple Saint Gervais, Geneva, 1823



The temple of St.Gervais in Geneva, is one of those mediaeval churches which were adapted for reformed worship. This drawing (1823) shows how the former separation between the choir and the nave disappeared in favour of a unified space of worship. Because Geneva at that time was a city which set the example for many reformed churches in Europe, the inner organisation of the temple of St. Gervais has probably served as a leading pattern for many other European reformed or Presbyterian churches.

2 The exclusion of carved images is the second fact which has made its impression on people of the 16th Century. It is the problem of the so-called "reformed iconoclasm". In that domain, the (reformed) reformers were of course much more drastic than the Lutherans, and the so-called "reformed iconoclasm" was not equally as severe or devastating in all of the reformed churches. In French Switzerland, for example, iconoclasts were much more destructive in Neuchâtel, under the influence of William Farel, than in Lausanne under the influence of the Zwinglian Reformation.

I have spoken of the "so-called" iconoclasm, because in many cases, the exclusion of images has been very selective. Bern was one of the strongest and most influential of reformed cities in the 16th Century.



Without the military help of Bern, Geneva would not have had the possibility of remaining reformed.



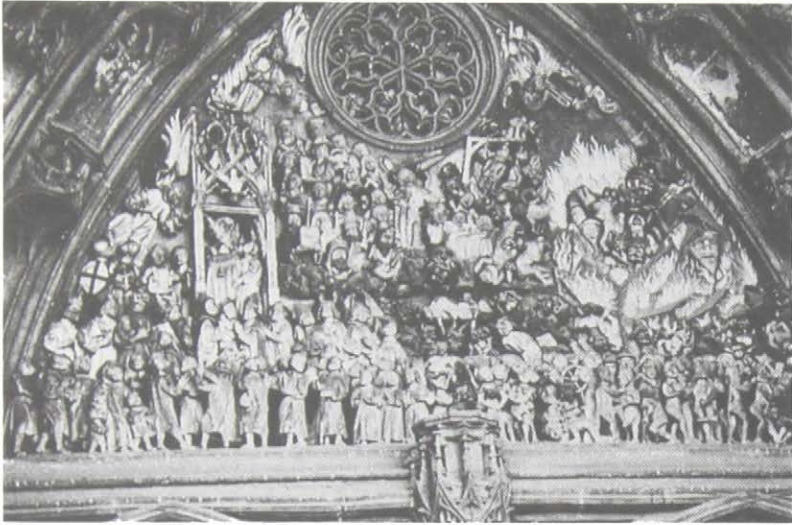
7. Bern, Münsterplatz: Moses, 1440

Now in Bern, in the area in front of the minster, there is a significant statue of Moses displaying the second commandment, namely the commandment against the idolatry of images. This statue was probably erected in the year 1540, about twelve years after the Reformation decree of 1528.

Such representations of Moses existed until the end of the 18th Century all over reformed churches. It is a convincing sign that, with



some exceptions, the reformed churches did not exclude all possible images, even in church buildings.



8. Bern, Münster, Tympanum of the Last Judgement

For example, if we are looking in the same direction as the statue of Moses in front of the minster in Bern, we see a wonderful representation of the Last Judgement. It exists to the present day because the reformers in Bern did not made any attempt to remove it.

The reformed Reformation did not fight against *any* image, but only against the "idols", namely the carved images which were worshipped in church buildings. But the progressive elimination of every image



from reformed halls of worship has been a logical and pragmatic consequence of the refusal to accept any form of visual idolatry.

One of my former students who was originally an architect, allowed me to state that the radical exclusion of figurative images had an interesting architectural consequence: if the attention of church-goers is not distracted by images, the volume of the inner space of the church buildings becomes the most important part of what is to be seen there. But, at the same time, seeing becomes less significant than experiencing the spaciousness of church buildings - experiencing them as a space for actual worship. In that sense, the lack of images in reformed churches opens the possibility for architecture as pure architectural matter and it respects simultaneously the reformed conviction that, if you are looking in a church building, you will see either the emptiness or you will see the congregation worshipping in it - and the congregation is the actual visible church.



9. Le Collet-de-Dèze, France, Lozère: Reformed Church



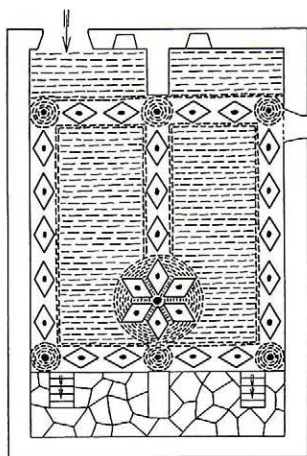
As an example of such an effect of space, here is perhaps the only remaining example of French reformed church buildings. It was built before the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. It is in Le Collet-de-Dèze, a little village in the Cévennes mountains, and the building is more or less intact. The church is in the middle of the village and was built according to the architectural rules of the other buildings of that mountain region.

The inner space seems more or less like a barn, with a stone vault upholding the roof beams. Such vaults or arches are very common in that area. What is of interest to us is the fact that the vault is not used in the width as is usual in mediaeval churches, but in the length. This example allows us feel how the space functions. In the case of a mediaeval or of a neo-gothic church, a main arch across the length works as cognitive separation between two areas - for example, between the sacerdotal and the lay area. On the contrary, in the present case of Le Collet-de-Dèze, the arch works as a unifying factor of all the worship space.

The present organisation of the furniture (pews, pulpit, table and so on) is probably not original. There is no sufficient documentation to be able to reconstruct the original arrangement. We can only suppose

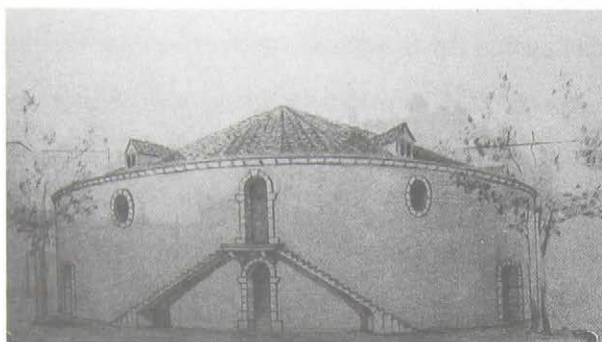


that the elevated platform was reserved for the elders of the church and perhaps as a base for the pulpit. Nevertheless, the present state is sufficient to let us feel how the building worked as an assembling factor for the congregation.



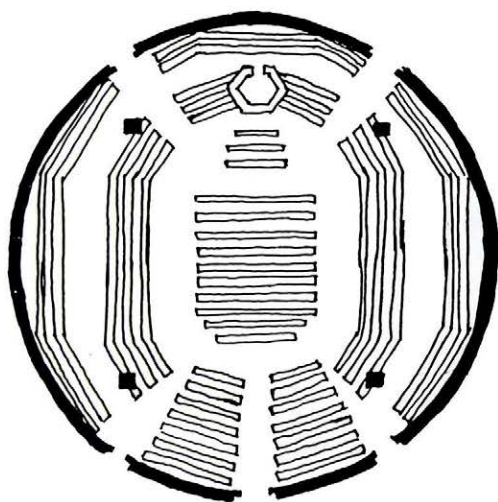
10. Le Collet-de-Dèze, pavement of the Church

An artist's impression of the former pavement shows clearly how the meaning of assembling was important for a reformed congregation of that time. We can imagine that the central round motif of the pavement was the assigned place for the communion table.



11. Temple Paradis, Lyon, (contemporary drawing)

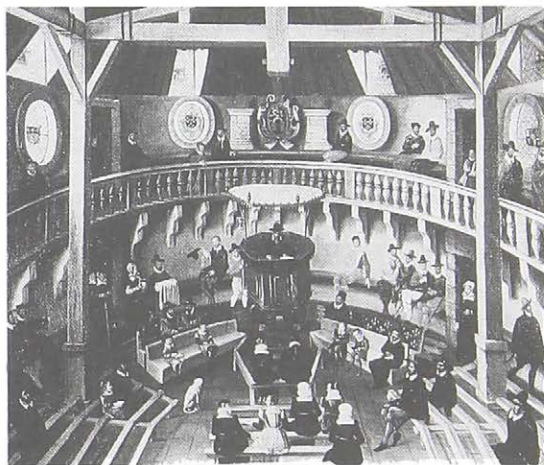
The oldest representation we have of a specific reformed church building is a painting of the "Temple Paradis" in Lyon (about 1575). In the second part of the 16th Century, Lyon was a reformed city, but only for five years. The reformed population built three specific worship houses. But the "Temple Paradis" is the only one from which we have a very few painted representations,.



12. Temple Paradis, hypothetical plan



It was a round or more probably elliptical building. Architectural historians have come to different conclusions about the origin of such a plan. But none of these hypotheses are really convincing. We can only register the fact that there is a new architectural form for the church buildings. The majority of commentators assert that this plan may be characteristic of the reformed concept of worship, because this worship hall is like an auditorium or a conference hall. They argue, then, that reformed worship is much more in the form of religious oratory than actual worship.



13. Temple Paradis, oil painting by Jean Périssin, 1564

But if we look at this well known painting, we see that the congregation is not distributed according to the same pattern as for



hearing a paper. They sit around the place where the pulpit is and on Communion Sundays around the table.

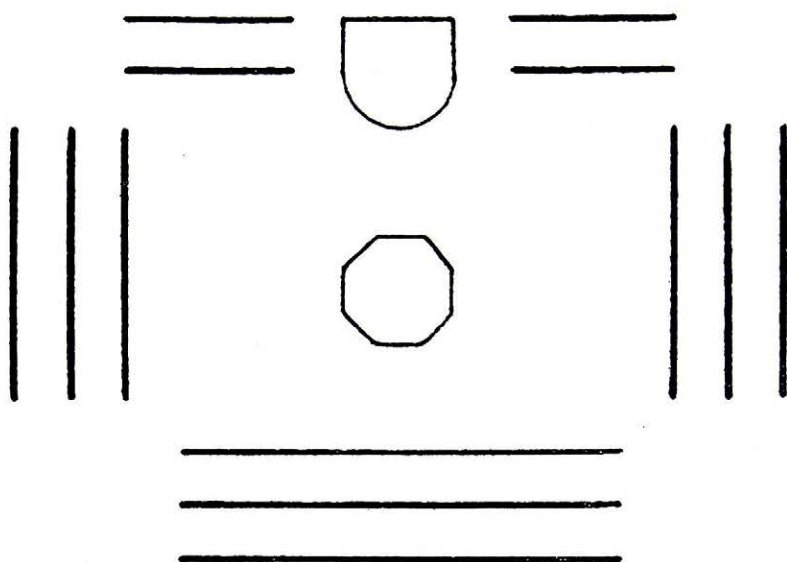
The seating arrangement is significantly the same as the seating we saw in a mediaeval church of the 15th Century. It may be that the pattern of the Temple Paradis was commonly a transposition of what happened in the Middle Ages by the worship of the so called "devotio moderna". In other words the pattern of the Temple Paradis and the most frequent pattern of reformed church buildings is the use of the nave and not of the choir.

But what is a choir? In a church building the choir is the place where the choral ministers meet together to sing to the glory of God. The reformed concept of worship postulates that singing the psalms to the glory of God is the function and the duty of the whole congregation, and not of a priestly choir alone. If the singing congregation sits in the nave (or in a building having the same pattern as a nave) and not in the former choir, it means the choir is no longer in the choral space, but in the nave.

My main thesis is that the reformed worshipping congregation is firstly a choral congregation and only secondly a hearing congregation.



To demonstrate this, we must proceed in a typological way. It means that from the observation of many reformed church buildings in different countries, I will attempt to deduce a theoretical pattern which is characteristic for the reformed concept of church architecture.

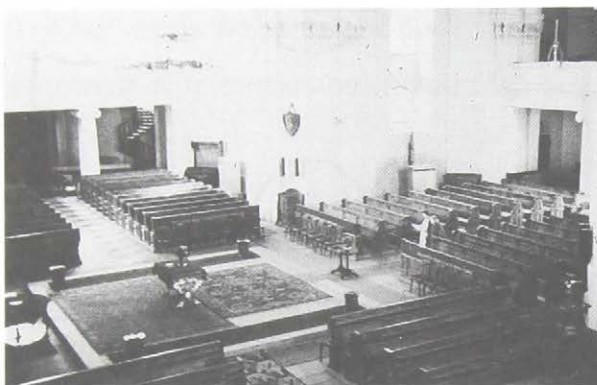


14. The Reformed Choral Square

I think it is possible to show in a convincing way, that the ground plan of the reformed concept of a church building is according to my own terminology, "a reformed choral square". It means that the seats of the congregation are shaped more or less in a square around the communion table. Particularly noticeable is the fact that for the classical eras of reformed architecture, namely for the 17th and first

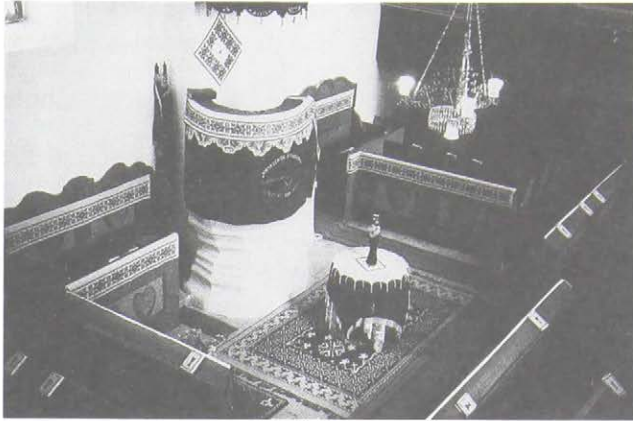


half of the 18th Centuries, in the centre of the worship space was the table, and not the pulpit. In my typological sketch, the pulpit belongs to the seats of the church elders. And normally in front of the pulpit stood the cantor, sometimes having his own pulpit, because his ministry was seen as important: he helped the congregation to be a choral or singing congregation.



15. Kolozsvár (Cluj), Transylvania: Great Reformed Church

In visiting various reformed churches in different countries, I discovered how often the choral square has been used as leading pattern for the organisation of the worship space. Here is the great reformed church of Kolozsvár in the capital of Transylvania.



16. Cioc, Transylvania : Unitarian Church

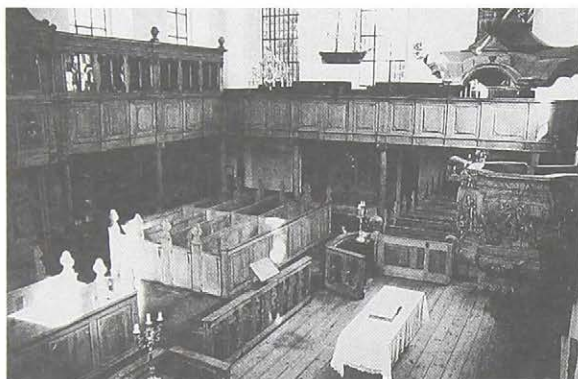
Or the Unitarian church of Cioc, also in Transylvania. The Transylvanian Unitarians originate from the reformed church and the liturgy they use is very nearly the same as is used in reformed churches.



17. Burgonovo, Bregaglia Valley, Switzerland : Reformed church

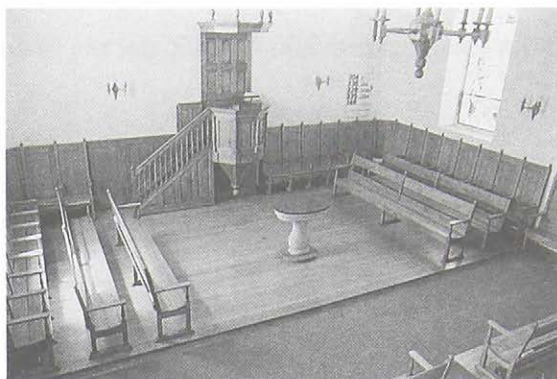


In the Bregaglia valley, the only Italian speaking valley, which was reformed from the 16th Century, it is interesting to note that the communion table is in the centre of the choral space, but for practical reasons the pulpit is at the side. It is, I think, a sign that the sermon was not as important in reformed usage as is so often supposed.



18. Copenhagen: French Reformed Church

The reformed church of Copenhagen was built by and for Huguenot refugees, under the direction of a queen, who was also reformed. This church with somewhat sophisticated furnishings might serve as a good example of reformed churches in the large and rich cities of France, if the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes had not been brutally interrupted by the expansionism policies of French reformed Protestantism.



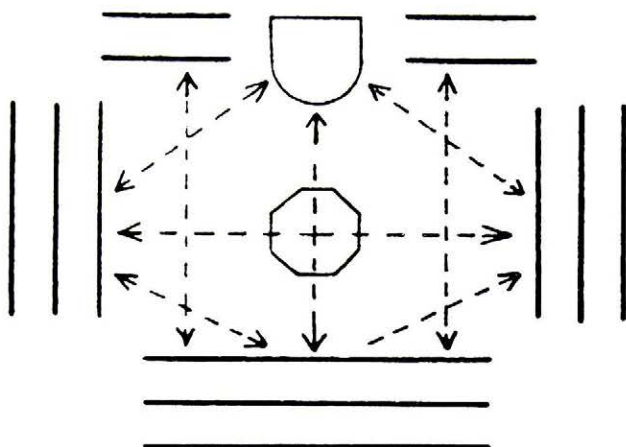
19. Interior Villars-sous-Yens, Switzerland. canton of Vaud

Finally, a village church in my own Canton, which was built in 1796. Noticeable is the communion table, consistent with the model, which was typical for the communion tables of this part of Switzerland. The table is small - much smaller than the pulpit. But its place in the middle of the church makes it important. The seats, with their backs to the walls and facing the worship area are also characteristic of many reformed churches. One final comment: The communion table is on the same level as the seats of the congregation. There is no written evidence from that time of that time to explain this arrangement. But the meaning is self-evident: the Eucharist is not an act of the minister, at which the congregation is present in the same way as the audience at a theatre. Communion is really an act of the congregation. The Eucharist is their concern as much as it is the concern of the ordained pastor. In other words, it is not necessary that



the congregation sees the minister celebrating the Eucharist; but it is necessary that the congregation takes part in the act of communion.

Now back to more theoretical remarks.

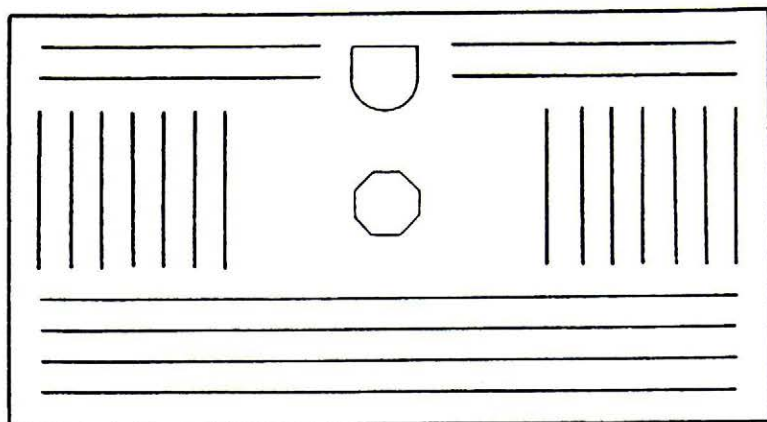


20. Sight Lines in the Reformed Choral Square

The reformed choral square provides for visual exchanges between the members of the congregation. If you sit according to this arrangement then, instead of having in front of you only the backs of peoples' necks and their permanent waves or baldness, you will see the various faces of the children of God, and you will have eye contact not only with the preacher but with all others present. You will see whether they are interested and alert or you will see that they are asleep. And you will notice that the congregation sings much better than in a frontal facing arrangement of seats. The choral square

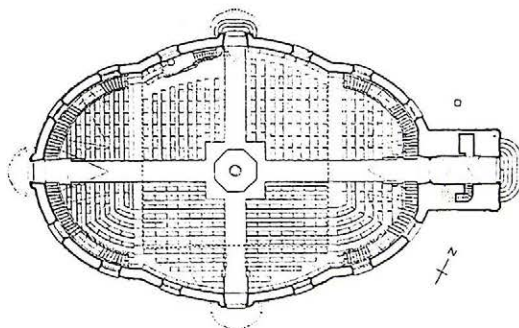


agrees with the twin ideas of communion and of communication - the choral square has been applied to different ground plans of reformed churches.



21. The Reformed Square as a rectangle organised in the width

The most wide-spread pattern is the rectangle organised in the width. As we have seen, it is a resumption of the mediaeval use of the church. One of the most beautiful and rigorous applications of this pattern is in Horgen, near Zürich.



22. Plan of the Reformed church of Horgen, Switzerland, canton of Zürich

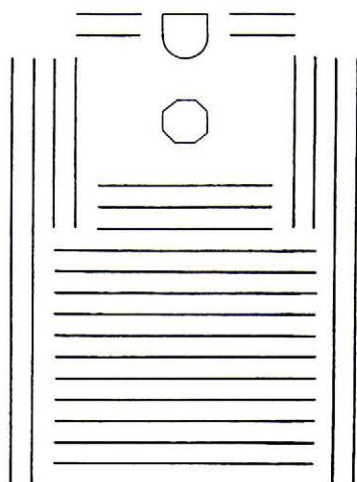


Horgen is in the area where the influence of Zwingli is most clearly seen to the present day. According to the reformed custom of Eastern Switzerland, the central and most important piece of the liturgical furniture is not the table, but the font. For the celebration of the communion, a wooden plate is placed on the font. The ground plan of Horgen makes it clearly visible how baptism and communion are both central for the reformed faith.



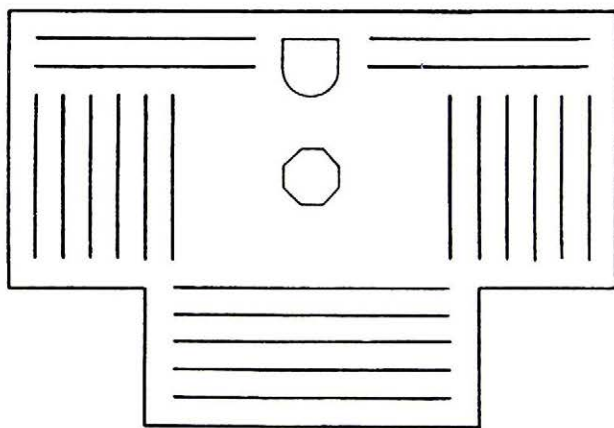
23 Reformed church of Horgen

It was of course, impossible to set the pulpit in the geometrical centre of the church. So, it is placed against the wall. But on the same minor axis as the font, according to the reformed and Protestant conviction that the audible and the visible word are two equivalent manifestations of the same divine and invisible word.



24 The Reformed Square as a rectangle organised in the length

Used lengthwise, the choral square was the solution chosen for the Temple of Charenton, near Paris. Though this solution was and is frequently applied, I think it is not the best arrangement, for reasons I will explain later.



25. T-plan



The T-shape is the solution in Gifford Church, Lothian. It was firstly more frequently applied in Scotland than it was on the Continent. There is one important reason for this usage: it is very good accoustically. Luther as well as Zwingli and Calvin asked that the preacher might be seen as well as understood. It is an absolute theological necessity in a church, where the congregation meets to share the living word of God. Good accoustics are already a symbolic dimension of reformed architecture, since there are audible as well as visible symbols in worship. In that sense, the T-plan is an interesting symbolic form too.

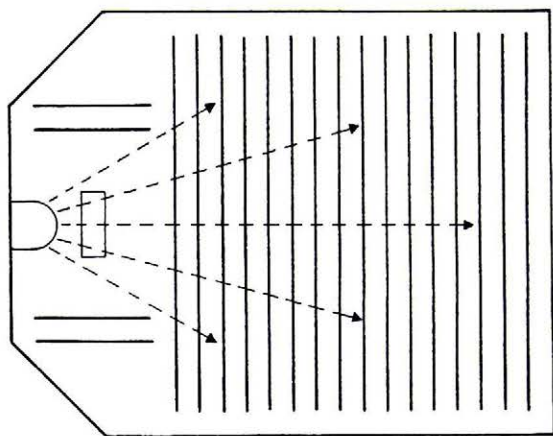


26. Lausanne : Montriond Reformed church, 1965

Now, if you are walking through reformed or Protestant churches in Europe, you will be astonished to see how many worship places are



organised length-wise with the congregation facing the minister or facing a so-called "liturgical space". Here, for example, is a reformed church of the 1960s in Lausanne. There are plenty of such Protestant churches, where the congregation sits like a soldiers' company facing the commander-in-chief. Why? I see three prevailing reasons:



27. One-way visual exchanges between the preacher and the congregation

1 The first one is the growing importance of the sermon as a religious discourse at the end of the 18th and the 19th Centuries, and the desire of the preachers to have better eye contact with the seated congregation. The need of visual exchanges between the members of the congregation disappeared in favour of exchanges between only the preacher and each individual member of the congregation.



28. Reformed church of Morges, Switzerland, canton of Vaud

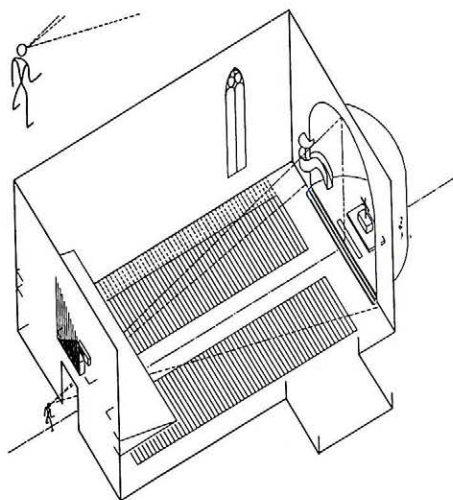
The importance and the centrality of the pulpit in the reformed Church of Morges, at Lake Geneva, may be a convincing example of the growing importance of the sermon at the expense of the symbolic actions of reformed worship. Built in the 18th Century, it is the largest Baroque reformed church building of the whole of French-speaking Europe.



29. St Peter's cathedral, by Carlo Bossoli, 1851



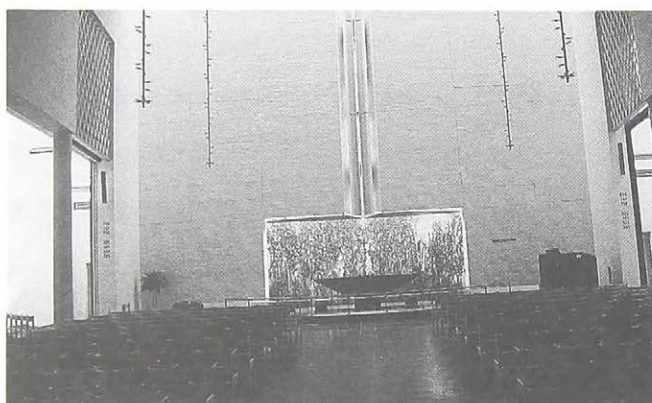
2 A second reason for the trend towards more and more front-facing pews for the congregation is due to the rising romanticism of the 19th Century. This painting shows a wedding ceremony in the reformed cathedral of Geneva in 1852. It is obvious that for the painter and well as his clients, the important matter was not the wedding ceremony as such, but rather, the religious atmosphere invoked by the building. In this case, the building itself is a symbol, but a symbol which assumes a pragmatic function. The Gothic architecture of the church is supposed to generate religious feelings and meanings. The reverberating sounds of the full organ sometimes become more significant than the words spoken by the minister. In circumstances like these, worship tends to be more of a religious “show” than a participative event.



30. The worship place as liturgical scene



A drawing by my colleague, Christoph Martin Werner, of the Faculty of Theology in Zürich, shows the architectural and liturgical consequences of that arrangement. On entering a church, the first thing that anyone sees is the liturgical space, which is, as in a theatre, on a higher level than the nave. The absence or presence of other people is immaterial. The central aisle between the pews is designed to lead the eye directly to the choir.



31. Fønnesbæk Lutheran Church, Ikast, Denmark, 1994

3 The third reason supporting the front-facing arrangement of pews I see emanating from the cinema. A French Catholic analyst has recently severely criticised those church buildings of the 1960s where the priest stands in front of a huge white screen, namely the white painted wall behind the altar, with such a large cross that it seems more like scenery for a Hollywood film than a representation of the



real cross of Calvary. I, too, have had the same impression on visiting some contemporary protestant churches in Denmark, for example, Fonnesbæk Lutheran Church in Ikast which was consecrated in 1994.

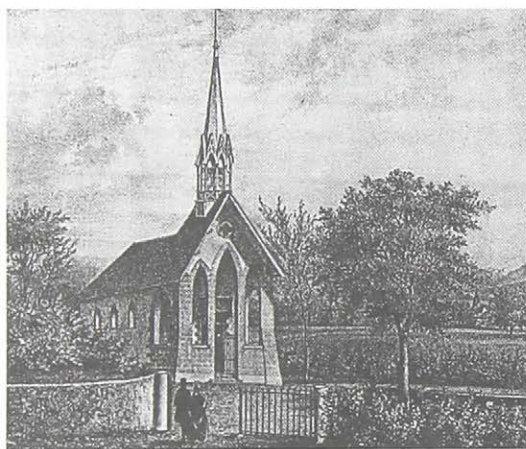


32. Fonnesbæk Church

This second view of the same church helps us feel how the altar and trees behind it seem like scenery for a film. The architect was, of course, deeply concerned to create a place which generated the impression of the sacred. But I wonder whether such a concept is really adaptable for protestant worship, or whether it tends to lead it in the direction of a religious “show” - a religious diversion from the harshness of human existence.



How to make visible the sacred is nevertheless a major problem for Protestant architecture of our time. When Protestants, from about 1835, began to choose the neo-Gothic style for their own worship houses, imitating in the same way the choice the Catholics had made from the beginning of the century, they were forced to face the same major problem. As long as Christianity characterised the totality of society, the problem of a specific religious style did not exist. But from the beginning of the last century, the question has been: How to design a church to make it identifiable as a Christian church or as a place of worship?



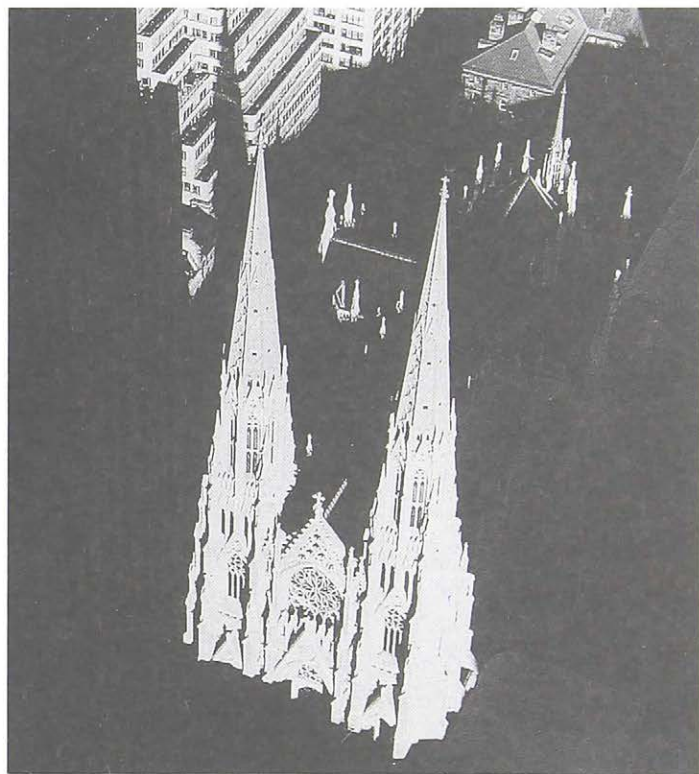
33. The oldest neo-Gothic Reformed church in the French-speaking part of Switzerland:

Vernier, 1837

From about 1835, a tacit consensus appeared, and was accepted even by the Protestants, that the Gothic style was "the only genuine



Christian style" - namely a style which is able to awaken both religious feelings and meanings. It is the reason why, for example, the representative of the reformed church of Geneva chose in 1837 to build a neo-gothic chapel as a reformed place of worship in the catholic village of Vernier, close to their city.

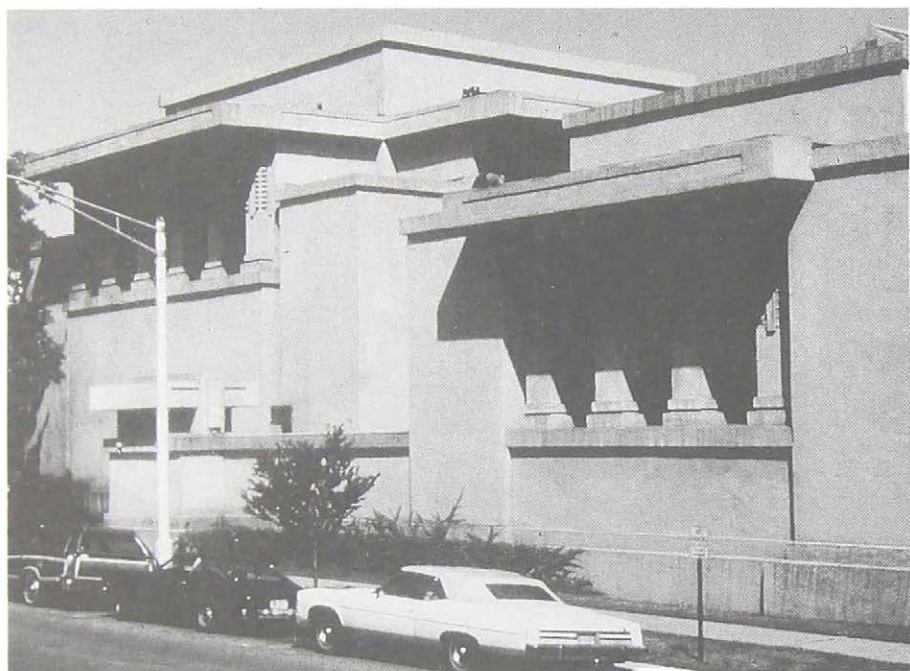


34. New York, St Patrick's cathedral

But what happens to the neo-Gothic style when a church like St Patrick's cathedral in New York is surrounded by skyscrapers? It



unavoidably becomes the symbol of a religion of the past, even if this pseudo-mediaeval style was not a vulgar copy of buildings of an earlier time, but happened to be a real architectural language, which was convenient for reformed churches too. But we know today that the choice of such a style was not a long-term solution, particularly if church architecture is to mark the place and the aims of the Christian faith in the middle of the modern or even post-modernist society.



35. Oak Park, Illinois: Unity Temple

The first quite convincing architectural visual realisation of a new concept of church buildings specifically designed for today is, of



course, Unity Temple, which Frank Lloyd Wright built between 1906 and 1908 in Oak Park, a middle class suburb of Chicago, Illinois. Unity Temple is not reformed but Unitarian. Nevertheless, the concept is Presbyterian, since American Unitarianism originated from Presbyterianism.

In a recent book, Joseph M Siry has shown how Wright conceived Unity Temple as a sign of religion for our time. So his technical as well as symbolical choices are interpreted as follows:

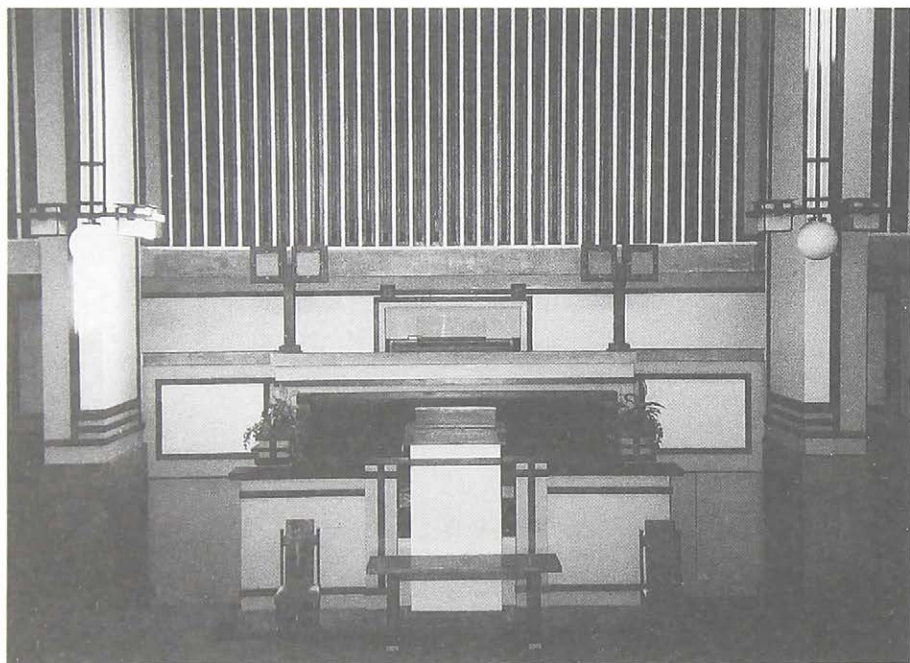
1 Unity Temple is the first church which was built solely with reinforced concrete. Now, concrete was typically the contemporary building material in the Chicago area. Built in concrete, Unity Temple was a sign that religion is able to be congenial with the new techniques of contemporary society.

2 By using concrete Wright has not imitated former churchly architectural forms. His aim was on the contrary to create "a new type of monumental architecture" - a type which was directly inspired by the techniques of concrete.

3 Unlike other churches which were built at the same time, Unity Temple has neither spire nor bell tower. This was on purpose. In a



sermon to raise funds for the building, the Revd. Johonnot, minister of the congregation, explained that the absence of a spire "expresses the thought [.....] that God should not be sought in the sky, but on earth among the children of men". It is a typical Unitarian expression. We may choose other words but the meaning remains true for us too: Reformed church architecture must make visible by its forms the concreteness of the Presbyterian concept of faith.



36 Unity Temple



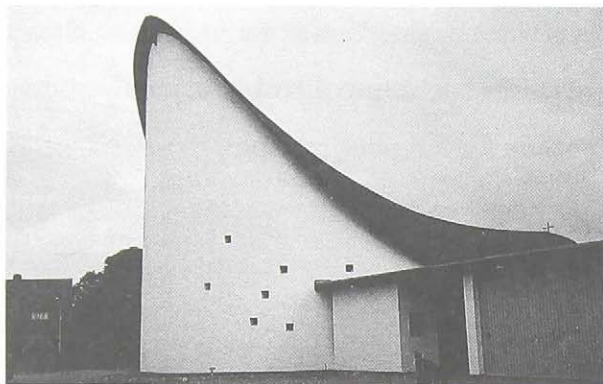
Meanwhile, Unity Temple is a real place of worship. Because it is Unitarian and not really reformed, there is neither a communion table nor a baptismal font. The Unitarian form of worship is at first spiritual, i.e. without visual sacramental forms. But on visiting the buildings, I was surprised to discover that it is conceived according to the same choral square as is usual for reformed churches. Why? Because Lloyd wished to create a real community room, and not an ordinary auditorium for religious readings.



37 La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland : St John's church



The problem of new architectural forms remains. Since the 1960s and 1970s, very new shapes are appearing. Here, for example, is one of the new reformed church buildings of La Chaux de Fonds, a city of clockmakers in the Swiss Jura mountains.



38 Denmark, Strandby church, 1966

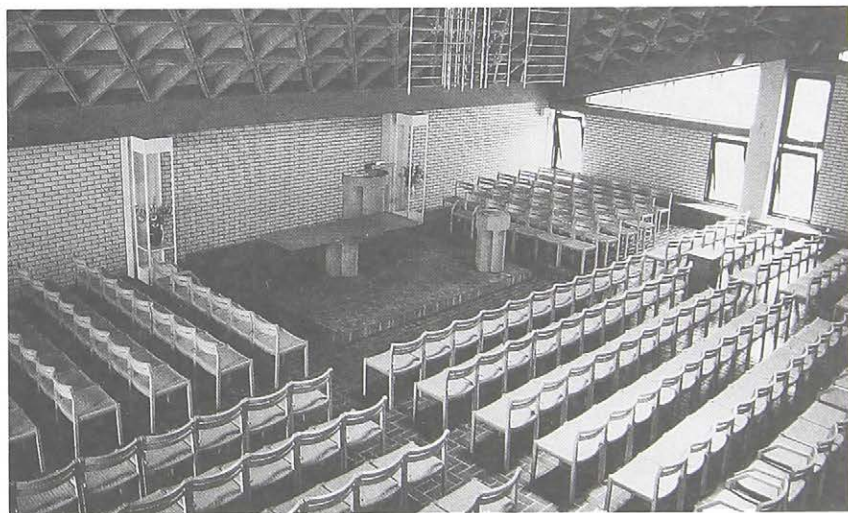
Or this new Lutheran church in Strandby, a village in the northern part of the Danish Jutland peninsula. Indeed the shape is not usual, but the building is undoubtedly a church.



39 Kamakura, Japan: Reformed church, 1985



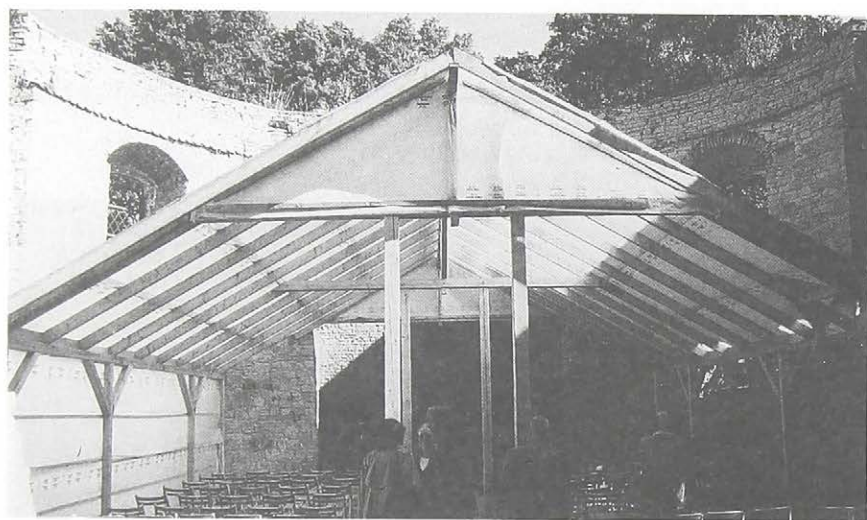
The most satisfying Protestant church building I visited in the last few months, is the new building of the United Church of Christ in Kamakura, near Tokyo, Japan. As you may know, Japanese Shinto or Buddhist architecture is very traditional. Therefore, Christian architecture has, as its first aim, to make the Christian church's identity instantly recognisable. But the first Christian churches were built by European missionaries, and Japanese Christians today wish to have church buildings which are different from the former European architectural arrogance. In this sense, the new Presbyterian church of Kamakura doesn't claim for itself too much space in the public area of Japan. It reflects the real dimension and the actual aims of Protestant Christianity in that non-Christian country.



40 Kamakura Reformed church



The building is a parish centre and includes different rooms for social and educational activities. The worship area is on the second floor and contains 400 seats, including the gallery. I was particularly glad to find so far from Europe, such a realisation of such high quality and of such a decidedly Presbyterian concept. I was glad, and envious too, because the more recent reformed churches, which were built in my own country do not correspond as closely to the reformed vision of worship.



41 Dommersleben, near Marburg, Germany

Let me close this presentation with a moving yet edifying image. In Dommersleben, near Magdeburg, in the former German Democratic



Republic, the roof of the Lutheran village church collapsed two decades after The Second World War. The congregation were not allowed to rebuild it. But in the last years of the Soviet regime, the faithful began to clear the surface of the roof. So in the summer time, they were again in a position to worship God inside their old church. But even in the Summer, not every Sunday is sunny. The temporary solution was to make a replacement roof of plastic tarpaulin. For me, this unrestored building poses a real question. Is it right for the Christian faith today to build new churches of stone or of concrete? They are, of course, signs of established churches and of the continuity of the Christian faith throughout the centuries. But the temporary church in Dommersleben might be a better sign for our times - the sign of a pilgrim church - of men and women, who know how difficult it is to find convincing architectural forms to express the Christian faith for today's society.

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