

Ways of Perceiving

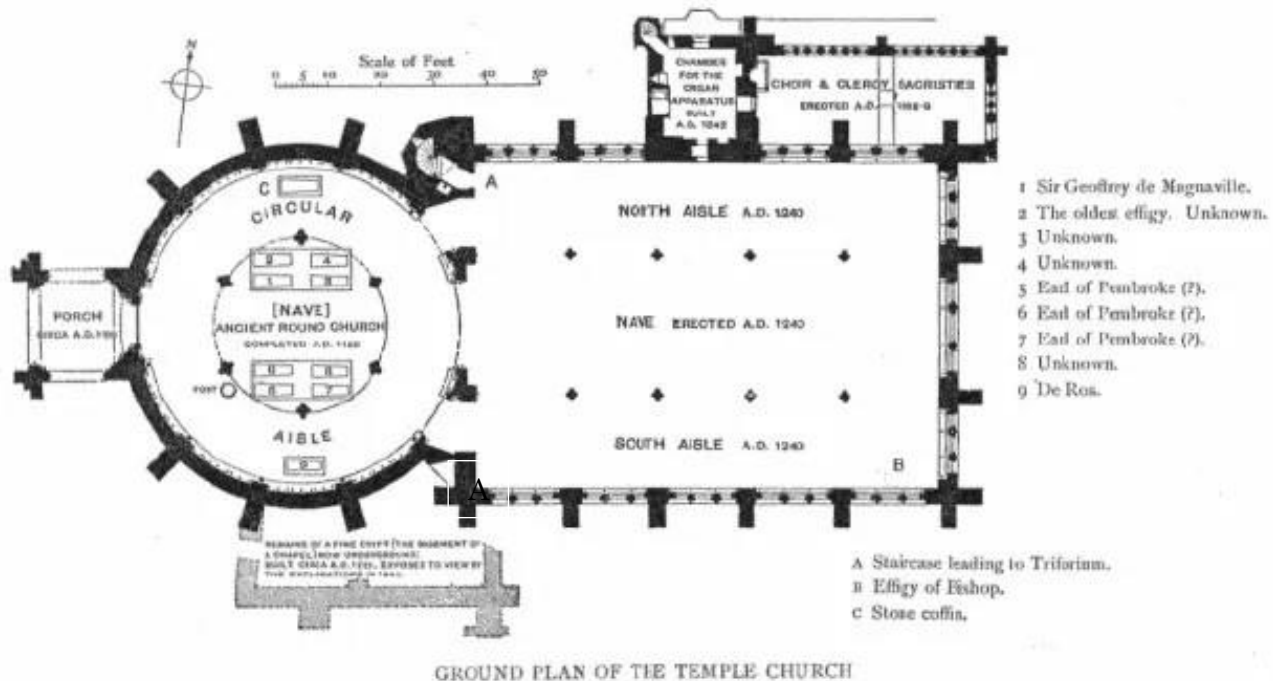
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Christianity's retreat into Secularisation

Location: Temple church, London. EC4Y 7BB

Measurements:



[https://www.academia.edu/35825112/Some dimensioned drawings of Templar Churches](https://www.academia.edu/35825112/Some_dimensioned_drawings_of_Templar_Churches)

Using the scale given and research I can decipher the measurements of the temple church.

Circular Nave:

Full diameter- 59 feet in diameter (17.9 meters), including the buttresses 79.2 feet (24.14 meters).

Using this information, I took the diameter and measured against the scale with a ruler and found the **rectangular nave** (from point A) was 89 feet in length (27.12 meters), combined the length of the building is 148 feet (45.11 meters), with buttresses 168.2 feet (52.29 meters).

When looking at the distance between each buttress its an estimated 17 feet (5.18 meters).

Height:

I could not find any resources to guild me on the hight of the building other than

- Height of the vault is :36 feet 3 inches (11.05 meters)

This shouldn't be too much of an issue though as I know the tall ceilings allow for a lot of room.

Secularisation being the 'disassociation or separation from religious or spiritual concerns' (Oxford dictionary) has never been more prevalent in our contemporary western society than with Christianity today. This is seen in the UK as 'Church membership has declined from 10.6 million in 1930 to 5.5 million in 2010' and 'membership is forecast to decline to 2.53 million (4.3% of the population) by 2025' (Faith Survey, 2023). Demographically, London remains to have the highest rate of Christianity despite secularisation with '56% of Christians in London pray regularly, as against 32% of Christians in the rest of Britain.' (Sherwood, 2020), this suggests that holding my exhibition in Temple Church in central London would attract a bigger and more direct audience. Furthermore, this exhibition aims too visually represent the progression of secularisation through biblical artwork being curatorially mirrored to contemporary interpretations that show the change in social values. Moreover, through theories such as postmodernism, religious rationalism, and symbolic interactionism I will explore secular issues such as when first entering Michelangelo's statue is a portrayal of Jesus dead in Mary's arms, this shows the sacrifices made towards Christianity, this being back-to-back with Palmer's statue shows how we have turned our back to Christianity and how technology and social media holds a higher level of interest to beliefs. Next, modernism's effect on sexuality is seen in Jordanes' depiction of Adam and Eve opposite Solomon's portrayal of same-sex love. Finally, Bosch and the Garden of Earthly Delights shows a biblical portrayal of a world in which humans have created chaos and disharmony, in which opposite is Burrows' photograph of war in Vietnam which shows the modern-day reality and questions Christianity due to religion's contribution to war and evil on this earth.

Multiple reasonings explain the decline in Christianity, but there are two main aspects this being social or intellectual. It's important this context is outlined as the curator is 'first and foremost the mediator or interpreter between photographer and audience' (Read, 2008, p.32), this suggests the way I display the work can change the perspective on the narrative. Intellectually, due to the progression in technology and dependence on science it's believed that 'we no longer think in terms of the supernatural. Our world view has changed, our conceptual framework altered' (Cox, 1965, p.60). This suggests people are more methodological with their beliefs, for example, The Pietà shows 'the image of the dead Jesus lying across the knee of his mother, it is hugely profound' (Taylor, 2003, p.77), the word 'dead' suggests he's passed. However, his resurrection is an example of what modern society finds hard to comprehend as it's suggesting 'the challenge to take this life and earth seriously, because everything is a parable, a beginning and not an end in itself.' (W. and L. Pelz, p.127). This is religious rationalism. Weber's theory of rationalisation states it has 'led to the disenchantment of society, religious motives for action are replaced by rational motives of action' (Revised Sociology, 2018). This suggests that we are becoming more theoretical and calculated in how we articulate the world. Arguably it's a result of capitalism where it is used to make people work to benefit the rich as they will be rewarded in the afterlife. Furthermore, this statue is symbolism that death isn't the end and it being built in 1499 is remnant of the Catholic Church and with witchcraft and the supernatural it would've been idolised during this time. Placing it at the beginning of the exhibition I found to be impactful as it signifies after Christ and his sacrifice for our sins and allow us to receive life which the next piece of artwork on Adam and Eve symbolises biblically through naturalism.



The Pietà, Michelangelo.
(1499)

Moreover, facing outwards and back-to-back with Michelangelo's statue I feel palmer's statue named Indian girl made in 1853 has gained its popularity through modernism where consumerism with technology has made us assume she is looking at her phone. The positioning with this against 'the pita' I feel shows we have turned our back on religion for technology and media. The other aspect of the decline in Christianity being social shows this, as secularisation is 'to be found in the changes in the value system of the community, brought about by the industrial revolution by consequent class division of English society'. (MacIntyre, 1967, p.58) This suggests our values in society have been based around industrialisation and Palmers making this during the industrial revolution reflects the 'colonizing viewpoint that Indigenous conversion to Christianity promoted broader assimilation to Euro-American cultural practices.' (The metropolitan museum, 2000-2023). This shows how societal values and culture at the image can change the narrative to the artwork over time, as today the first thought is that he was interpreting a prediction of modernism, in other words this is the epitome of the postmodernism theory. Compared to the previous theory on rationalism, postmodernism rejects this idea and objective realities, here they believe we are in constant change where in postmodernism there are 'no universal ethical or religious laws, everything is shaped by the cultural context of a particular time place and community'. (BBC, 2009) I feel this is symbolic of the previous analysis and how the secularisation has affected our view on both religion and artwork.



Indian Girl, Erastus Dow Palmer. (1853)



Adam and eve, Jacob Jordaens. (1640s)

Biblically, Adam and Eve are iconic symbols of traditionalism in Christianity through both sexuality and patriarchy, following 'The pieta' this is comparative to new life which Jesus died for. However, Jordaens. approach shows Adam reaching for the fruit while lying on the ground showing Eve in a glorified way. I believe intellectually, the creation of man through Adam and Eve and not evolution is not a well scientifically proven which is why most reject these ideologies. Socially the rise in feminism has also meant quotes from the bible such as "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labour, you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." (Genesis:16) to spark debate about equality through the representation of women.

Placed opposite the depiction of Adam and Eve, Solomon's controversial portrayal of homosexuality during 1864 shows reasoning for secularisation happening socially as Christianity looked down upon this. Relating to time with Jordaens work this visually shows a change in attitudes through time, however they both share a renaissance style symbolising religion. Furthermore, his interest in Christianity and his personal life as an open homosexual at the height of Victorian mortality is beautiful depicted but the cultural and religious restrictions meant it was far too controversial and risky, meaning its popularity has spiked after his death. For example, today we have the same sex Marriage Act 2013 which 'The number of same-sex couples recorded as living together in the UK rose by more than 50% in the three years to 2018' (BBC news, 2019) this suggests that religion isn't that accounted for anymore in terms of religious labels and values.



Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mytilene, Simeon Solomon. (1864)

Having this image installed in my exhibition shows a social form of secularisation as the oppression from some of the values created in Christianity mean many homosexuals now reject it. Although symbolic interactionism shows that it can have physical and mental benefits. This is because as functionalists would argue religion creates social norms and values through Christianity that create a collective consciousness an example being symbols, signs, and songs that they share.

Approaching the end of the church signifies the religious journey from the birth of religion to the chaos and secularised society we are now in. The work to the left being on Adam and eve, Bosch's Garden of heavenly delights explores this further but extends it into a portrayal of modern chaos. It represents the third day, a biblical milestone when earthly paradise was forged by God.

Humanity is represented here next to the depiction of hell showing both sides to Christianity. The belief of hell in today's society doesn't have the effect that it did 100 years ago, we are less controlled by the state and with theories such as Merton's strain theory which states 'that crime occurs when there aren't enough legitimate opportunities for people to achieve the normal success goals of a society'(ReviseSociology,2016) it explains that the intersections of religion and morality involve the relationship between religious views and morals. This shows the decline in Christianity is to do with the change in our moral belief in what we see as prosperous in our life, and in our consumerism society



The garden of earthly delights, Hieronymus Bosch. (1515)



The LIFE Magazine Collection, Larry Burrows (1966)

Opposite, the garden of delight I wanted to present the true reality of modernism and chaos. I choose Burrows work as firstly photography shows a modern contemporary advancement rather than painting, and his documentation in the Vietnam wars shows the true epitome of chaos and the power of religion in guiding individuals through this experience but also how it can create war. Burrows Sais 'You can't photograph bullets flying through the air, so it must be the wounded, or people running with ammunition, and the expressions on their faces' (Chan, 2018). This is like how Bosch creates scenes within his work. Although, intellectually and socially its questioned as to why if there is a god who protects and cares for us is there so much death and hatred and suffering in the world. An example being in WW1 where 'Over the course of the war, 880,000 British forces died, 6% of the adult male population and 12.5% of those serving.' (UK Parliament) with so much death in the world it can make people fall either in atheism or they turn to religion for comfort with grief. Arguably, this is a form of capitalism where state control the beliefs and is also used to make people work to benefit the rich as they will be rewarded in the afterlife.

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Map of my exhibition

My exhibition will be held on the ground floor, and consist of the artists Michelangelo, Erastus Dow Palmer, Simeon Solomon, Jacob Jordaens, Hieronymus Bosch and Larry Burrows.

The Pietà, Michelangelo. (1499)



174 cm x 195cm

Adam and eve, Jacob Jordaens. (1640s)

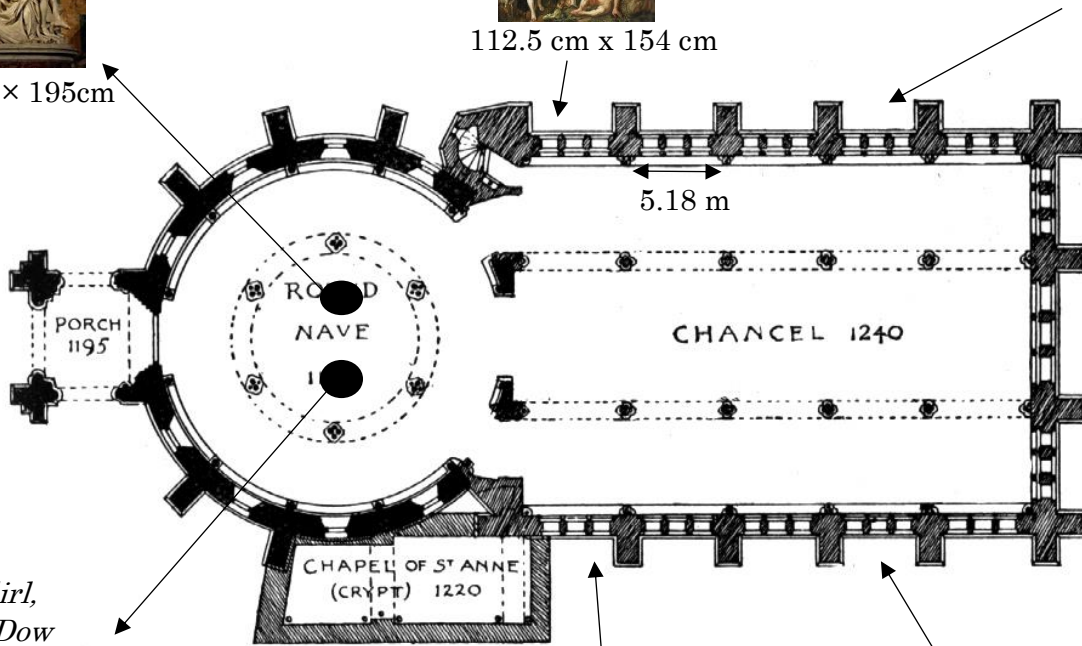


112.5 cm x 154 cm

The garden of earthly delights, Hieronymus Bosch. (1515)



2.2 m x 3.89 m



Indian Girl, Erastus Dow Palmer. (1853)



5 foot tall

Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mytilene, Simeon Solomon. (1864)



33 cm x 38.1 cm

The LIFE Magazine Collection, Larry Burrows (1966)



23 x 33.8 cm