



OXFORD JOURNALS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS



Fictions of Privacy: House Chapels and the Spatial Accommodation of Religious Dissent in
Early Modern Europe

Author(s): Benjamin J. Kaplan

Source: *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 107, No. 4 (October 2002), pp. 1031-1064

Published by: Oxford University Press on behalf of the American Historical Association

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/532663>

Accessed: 02-04-2018 22:52 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Oxford University Press, American Historical Association are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The American Historical Review*

Fictions of Privacy: House Chapels and the Spatial Accommodation of Religious Dissent in Early Modern Europe

BENJAMIN J. KAPLAN

IN AMSTERDAM'S OLDEST NEIGHBORHOOD, on the corner of the Oudezijds Voorburgwal and the Heintje Hoekssteeg, stands a unique museum. Despite the banner hanging in front, tourists—on foot or in boats—often pass right by it, mistaking it for an ordinary house. Tall and thin, in the manner typical of Dutch residential architecture, the building dates from circa 1629 and was extensively rebuilt in 1661–1663, when its owner, a stocking merchant named Jan Hartman, had a figure of a hart set in the front façade and renamed the building after himself. A drawing from around 1805 shows how it looked, with three bays and a neck gable (Figure 1). Its exposed right flank reveals the unusual depth of the structure, which consists of a canal house plus two “rear houses” facing the alley, all under a single roof and connected internally. Rows of windows indicate five stories; steps lead down to a basement door, while a staircase parallel to the front façade gives access to the main door. Entering, modern visitors to the Amstelkring Museum find themselves in a well-preserved seventeenth-century merchant's house. Hartman used the airy front room, with its double tier of windows and high ceiling, to display his wares, the one behind it to keep his books. Following the museum's suggested route, visitors work their way upward, passing through a series of domestic chambers, among them the *Sael* (sitting room), a pristine model of neoclassicism and monument to Hartman's social pretensions. Only when they reach the third floor do they see what inspired a group of prominent Dutch Catholics in 1887 to purchase the building and make it a museum. There they find themselves suddenly in a church.

It was named “Our Lord in the Attic” (*Ons' Lieve Heer op Solder*) in the nineteenth century; before, it was simply called the Hart, or the Haantje. Invisible from the street, this place of Roman Catholic worship could accommodate over 150 congregants. To reach it, worshipers entered a side door facing the alley and then climbed some thirty stairs. Narrow and deep, its main hall occupies almost the entire third floor; large rectangular holes in the fourth and fifth create two sets of

Earlier versions of this article were presented to groups at the Folger Shakespeare Library; the University of Maryland, College Park; Harvard University; the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars; Catholic University of America; the Institute for Research in the Humanities, Madison, Wisconsin; and the Sixteenth Century Studies Conference. The author is grateful for all the comments and suggestions received on those occasions. He is grateful also to the Woodrow Wilson Center, the Institute for Research in the Humanities, and the University of Iowa for their financial support of this research.



FIGURE 1: House called "The Hart," corner of Oudezijds Voorburgwal and Heintje Hoekssteeg, Amsterdam, exterior view. It is the furthest right of the three houses. Detail from J. L. van Beek after C. van Waardt, *De Bloei der R.C. Kerk te Amsterdam*, etching, circa 1805. Courtesy of Gemeentearchief Amsterdam.

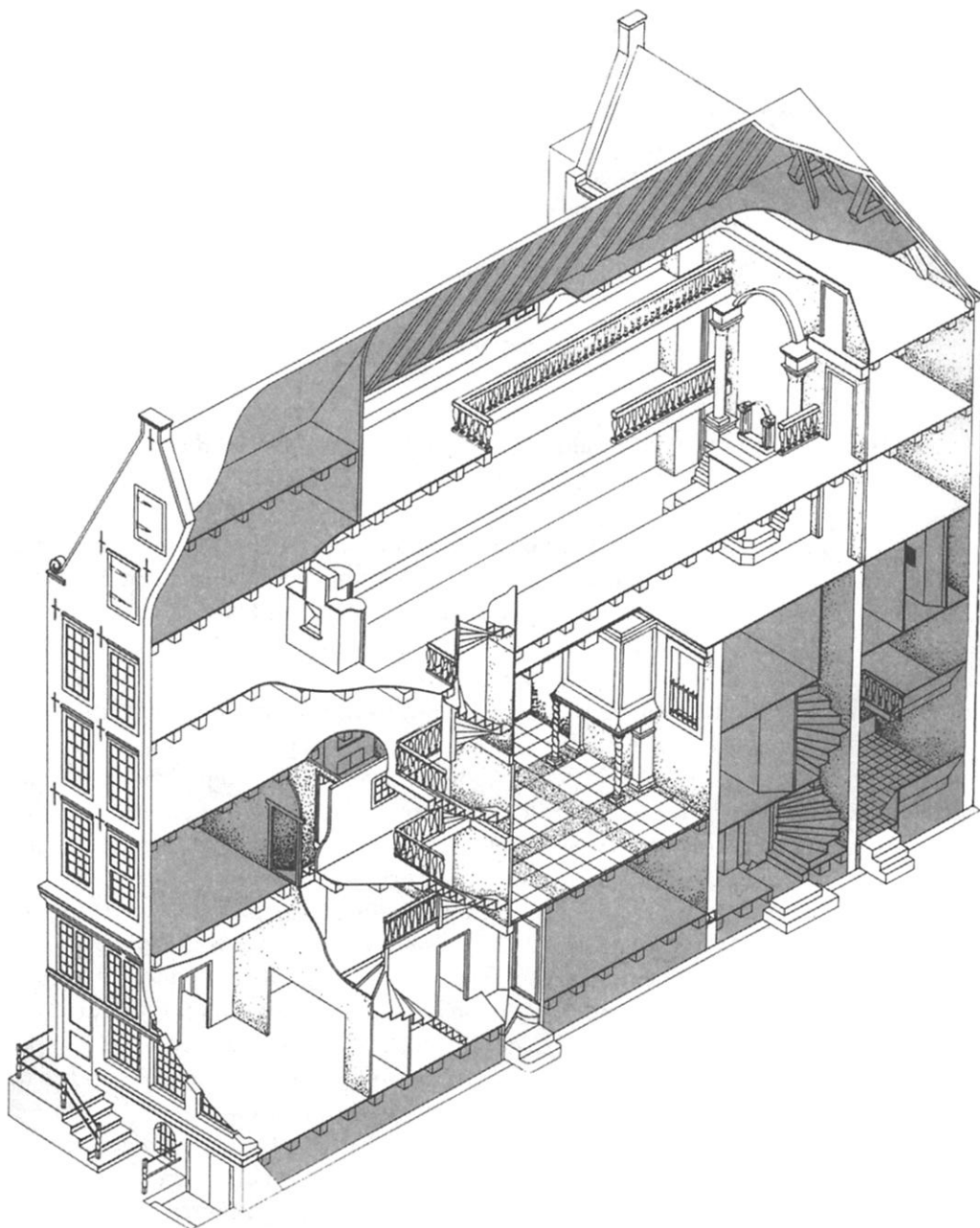


FIGURE 2: Cross-sectional drawing of the Hart (Museum Amstelkring), with clandestine church beginning on the third floor. Courtesy of Museum Amstelkring.

galleries (Figures 2, 3). Along the side walls are two pews reserved for prominent men. At one end of the hall stands the main altar, on it a rosewood tabernacle, behind it an altarpiece set in a high baroque frame rising two stories high. The painting, which dates from around 1716, is a Baptism of Christ in the Jordan by Jacob de Wit; formerly, it hung for only part of the liturgical year, taking turns on



FIGURE 3: Clandestine church in the Hart, called “Our Lord in the Attic” (*Ons’ Lieve Heer op Solder*). Modern photograph taken from the main floor. Courtesy of Museum Amstelkring.

display with several other altarpieces. Inside the base of the frame’s left column nestles a small pulpit, built in the late eighteenth century, pivoting out into the left aisle for use. Behind the altar frame is a door to an ancillary chapel; opposite it, on the first gallery level, an organ.¹

¹ Marco Blokhuis, et al., eds., *Vroomheid op de Oudezijds: Drie Nicolaaskerken in Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, 1988), 37–99; *Amstelkring Museum—Ons’ Lieve Heer op Solder* (Amsterdam, 1977); R.

The Hart is one of the best-preserved examples of what the Dutch call a *schuilkerk*, or clandestine church. In its day, it had counterparts throughout the northern Netherlands. In Amsterdam alone, Catholics had twenty of these illegal places of worship in 1700 and Mennonites six, while at least four other groups had one each. In Utrecht, there were fifteen: eleven Catholic, two Mennonite, one Lutheran, one Remonstrant. As early as 1620, Haarlem had eleven: seven Catholic, three Mennonite, and one Lutheran.² In certain towns, groups perceived as foreigners had splendid places of worship that were not at all clandestine, such as Amsterdam's Portuguese synagogue, built in 1675, or the eighteenth-century Lutheran church in Middelburg, whose congregation consisted largely of German immigrants.³ Non-Calvinists of native descent, though, worshiped overwhelmingly in *schuilkerken*. In the Generality Lands—the southern strip of territory captured by the Dutch army that belonged to no one of the seven provinces—the large majority of the population, being Catholic, relied on *schuilkerken* for services.

Historians have long recognized that *schuilkerken* played a crucial role in the religious life of the Dutch Republic. For political reasons, the Calvinist, or Reformed Church, emerged from the revolt against Spain as the official church of the republic, with unique powers and privileges.⁴ Religious dissenters, however, enjoyed a de facto tolerance that made Dutch society religiously the most diverse and pluralistic in seventeenth-century Europe. The *schuilkerk* was the chief accommodation, or arrangement, whereby dissenters worshiped in what was officially a Calvinist country. Behind closed doors, they operated churches with permanent clergy and regular services, in violation of hundreds of placards; what harassment they suffered from authorities was sporadic and local, and in any event dropped sharply over time. Also, as scholars have recently emphasized, the secrecy in which these churches operated was never very strict. On the contrary, neighbors and even strangers knew about their existence; indeed, magistrates often had a significant if informal say in the appointment of their pastors. For this reason, a few scholars reject the very use of the term *schuilkerk*, which, as Sebastien Dudok van Heel points out, goes back only to the nineteenth century, when Catholics, caught up in their emancipation movement, exaggerated the oppression under which their ancestors lived.⁵

Meischke, "De huiskerk 'Het Hert' aan de O.Z. Voorburgwal," *Maandblad Amstelodamum* 43 (1956): 149–60; P. M. Grijpink, "Kerk van den H. Nicolaas, bijgenaamd het Hert, te Amsterdam," *Bijdragen voor de geschiedenis van het bisdom Haarlem* 31 (1908): 258–86.

² Jan Wagenaar, *Amsterdam in zijne opkomst, aanwas, geschiedenissen, vorregten, koophandel, gebouwen, kerkenstaat, schoulen, schutterye, gilden en regeeringe* (Amsterdam, 1760), vol. 3, book 3; Benjamin J. Kaplan, "Confessionalism and Its Limits: Religion in Utrecht, 1600–1650," in *Masters of Light: Dutch Painters in Utrecht during the Golden Age* (San Francisco and Baltimore, 1997), 60–71; Joke Spaans, *Haarlem na de reformatie: Stedelijke cultuur en kerkelijk leven, 1577–1620* ('s-Gravenhage, 1989), 91–104.

³ Peter van Rooden, *Religieuze regimes: Over godsdienst en maatschappij in Nederland, 1570–1990* (Amsterdam, 1990), 25.

⁴ The most recent account in English appears in Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477–1806* (Oxford, 1995); the most influential remains Pieter Geyl, *The Revolt of the Netherlands, 1555–1609* (London, 1958); see also esp. Alastair Duke and Rosemary L. Jones, "Towards a Reformed Polity in Holland, 1572–1578," *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis* 89 (1976): 373–93.

⁵ For examples of magisterial involvement, see Spaans, *Haarlem na de reformatie*, 92, 96–97. Dudok van Heel proposed to use the term *huiskerk* instead of *schuilkerk*, and some scholars have followed him.

If historians have described the Dutch *schuilkerk* often enough, though, they have never explained it fully. Like those of other countries, historians of the Netherlands have paid far more attention to theories of religious tolerance than to its practice. They have dissected the arguments offered by major proponents of tolerance, such as Dirck Coornhert and Pieter de la Court, and summarized the statutes and resolutions that set government policy toward the various churches and religious groups. Such intellectual and politico-legal approaches continue to dominate the historiography of religious tolerance in early modern Europe. With their focus on ideas and intentions rather than behavior and actions, they have left much unknown about the concrete arrangements and accommodations that made it possible, in certain communities, for people of conflicting beliefs to live peacefully alongside one another. Whereas scholars like Natalie Zemon Davis, Barbara Diefendorf, and Denis Crouzet have offered new insights into religious violence by treating it as a form of patterned behavior enacted on the popular, local level, the historiography of early modern Europe has so far produced few studies that treat tolerance similarly.⁶

The *schuilkerk* offers an opportunity to do so. It raises a host of questions about the sensibilities, social interactions, boundaries, and complicities involved in confessional coexistence. If *schuilkerken* were not genuinely clandestine, why the pretense of secrecy at all? Under what restrictions did they operate, and how were those restrictions set? Why did magistrates so often condone them, and why did neighbors of other faiths not react violently to their presence? What was the relationship between official (in)action and popular opinion? And why did dissenters settle for such cramped, inconvenient, inglorious places of worship, leaving the position of the official church essentially unchallenged?

These questions gain additional urgency when one realizes that the Dutch *schuilkerk* had thousands of counterparts elsewhere in Europe. Such edifices went by a variety of names: house churches, prayer houses, meeting houses, mass houses,

Van Eck has championed the continued use of *schuilkerk*. Contrary to his assertion, *huiskerk* was indeed one of many terms contemporaries used in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, along with *huiskapel* and *kerkhuis*. S. A. C. Dudok van Heel, "Amsterdamse schuil- of huiskerken?" *Holland* 25 (1993): 1–10; Xander van Eck, *Kunst, twist en devotie: Goudse schuilkerken 1572–1795* (Delft, 1994), 3–4, 225 n. 8; *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, 29 vols. (1882–1998), 6: 1251–52, 7/1: 2341. R. Schillemans reviews the question in "Zeventiende-eeuwse altaarstukken in de amsterdamsche staties: Een inventarisatie," in *Putti en Cherubijntjes: Het religieuze werk van Jacob de Wit (1695–1754)*, Guus van den Hout and Robert Schillemans, eds. (Haarlem, 1995), 53–71.

⁶ Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Rites of Violence," in Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, Calif., 1975), 152–87; Barbara B. Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth Century Paris* (New York, 1991); Denis Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu: La violence au temps des troubles de religion (vers 1525–vers 1610)* (Seysssel, 1990). The most prominent exceptions to the last generalization are Etienne François, *Die unsichtbare Grenze: Protestanten und Katholiken in Augsburg 1648–1806* (Sigmaringen, 1991); Gregory Hanlon, *Confession and Community in Seventeenth-Century France: Catholic and Protestant Coexistence in Aquitaine* (Philadelphia, 1993); Paul Warmbrunn, *Zwei Konfessionen in einer Stadt: Das Zusammenleben von Katholiken und Protestanten in den paritätischen Reichsstädten Augsburg, Biberach, Ravensburg und Dinkelsbühl von 1548 bis 1648* (Wiesbaden, 1983); Joachim Whaley, *Religious Toleration and Social Change in Hamburg 1529–1819* (Cambridge, 1985); Peter Zschunke, *Konfession und Alltag in Oppenheim: Beiträge zur Geschichte von Bevölkerung und Gesellschaft einer gemischtkonfessionellen Kleinstadt in der frühen Neuzeit* (Wiesbaden, 1984); and, inconsistently, Ole Grell and Bob Scribner, eds., *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation* (Cambridge, 1996).

house chapels, oratories, assembly places. Little studied by historians, they could be found in France, Austria, the British Isles, and the Holy Roman Empire. There, as in the Dutch Republic, they served as a mechanism—not the only one but a crucial one—for the accommodation of religious dissent at the local level. Examining them alongside the Dutch *schuilkerk* offers insight, therefore, into a phenomenon that transcended national boundaries—into a particular way that religious tolerance was constructed and practiced in Europe in the era between Reformation and French Revolution.⁷

As these architectural artifacts attest, one way that tolerance worked in this era was through a new distinction between public and private worship. This distinction came, in one sense, to be set literally in stone, embodied in the architecture of buildings. In a more important sense, though, its boundaries were constantly being negotiated. Parties to this process included not just governing authorities and religious dissenters but also neighbors and fellow citizens, to whose opinion both authorities and dissenters were sensitive. Defined chiefly in symbolic and visual terms, the resulting boundaries were fundamentally different from the legal ones distinguishing public from private in the modern world. Examining them sheds new light on the broader distinction, much discussed by scholars, between public and private life in the early modern era. On the one hand, the *schuilkerk* testifies to an equation of the private sphere with the family home. On the other, it raises questions about the rise postulated by German philosopher Jürgen Habermas of an “authentic, bourgeois” public sphere in the eighteenth century.

Ultimately, I shall argue, the early modern distinction between public and private was as much cultural fiction as it was social reality. The *schuilkerk* and its equivalents were bona fide churches, places where large assemblies took place, not without the knowledge of magistrates and neighbors. Both the religious dissenters who attended their services and the orthodox who tolerated them were engaging in a pretense. Nevertheless, this pretense provided a crucial detour, as it were, around one of the chief obstacles to religious pluralism: the central role of religion in defining communal identity. By containing religious dissent within spaces demarcated as private, *schuilkerken* preserved the monopoly of a community’s official church in the public sphere. By maintaining a semblance of religious unity, they neutralized the threat posed by dissent to the identity and thus to the very integrity of communities.

IN A EUROPE DIVIDED INTO COMPETING CONFESSIONS, the *schuilkerk* addressed an urgent dilemma: the vital role that religion continued to play in shaping collective identity and social life. However many changes the Reformation and Counter-Reformation brought, they did not end the close intertwining of civic and sacral community that had characterized the late Middle Ages. In large, nuclear villages, parish and commune were often one and the same in terms of membership, territory, and leaders. Physically and symbolically, the parish church, with its

⁷ See my forthcoming book, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Harvard University Press).

surrounding cemetery, usually stood at the center of the village; dances, markets, feasts, and assemblies all typically took place in or in front of them. Time itself marched to the beat of the church, with saints' days or sabbaths setting the rhythm of work and leisure. The same was true in cities, although there the rhythm could vary among neighborhoods and parishes within the larger whole. As units, though, most cities retained a strong sense of collective responsibility to God. Those of the Holy Roman Empire provide a case in point. As late as 1700, the statutes of most included a wealth of religious and moral injunctions. A typical example is the 1650 constitution of Nördlingen, a Lutheran town; its very first article forbade cursing and blasphemy, urging burghers to "warn, pray for, and admonish one another" not to engage in such, "for the honor of God's will, for the better appeasement of His righteous and well-deserved wrath, and for the laudable establishment of Christian discipline and civic honor in our city and *commune*."⁸ Most German cities made orthodoxy a prerequisite for full citizenship. Moreover, as Etienne François has found, it was the most autonomous and communal cities that equated civic and sacral life most closely, and, as a result, were most intolerant.⁹

This equation manifested itself most clearly in times of real or impending disaster—of war, plague, famine, or political crisis. These were moments of special peril for religious dissenters, who might be blamed either as concrete agents or as spiritual causes. Popular opinion saw in their opposition to the dominant church an enmity extending to the community and to the entire established order, which that church embodied spiritually. This made them notoriously vulnerable to accusations of conspiracy and sedition. To avert impending disaster, entire cities turned to fasting and prayer, if Protestant, or mounted elaborate processions, if Catholic. Both viewed such disasters as expressing God's wrath, which would descend on any community that tolerated heresy or vice in its midst. The 1656 debates in England's parliament about the Quaker James Nayler are typical in their language, drawn from the Old Testament, and their reasoning: the only way to "divert the judgement from the nation," pronounced horrified members of Parliament, was to crush the heresy and thus "vindicate the honour of God."¹⁰ Neither Reformation nor time, nor the fragmentation of English Protestantism, had eradicated the legislators' sense of belonging to a *corpus Christianum*. In this sense, people continued to view their *salus*—their welfare, both spiritual and material—as a collective affair, to be won or lost by all together.

So long as this mentality prevailed, toleration could only be grudging. It was a mentality that construed all religious deviance (however defined) as undermining the integrity of the entire community and its standing before God. Calvinists quoted frequently and with intense feeling the words of the Apostle Paul: "Do not share in another man's sins" (1 Timothy 5: 22). In their view, and equally that of their rivals, to admit a heretic to one's company was to share in his sin. One of the most widely

⁸ August Friedrich Schott, *Sammlungen zu den Deutschen Land- und Stadtrechten*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1772–73), 1: 204; see also Mack Walker, *German Home Towns: Community, State, and General Estate 1648–1871* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1971), 42.

⁹ Warmbrunn, *Zwei Konfessionen*, 11–15; Etienne François, "De l'uniformité à la tolérance: Confession et société urbaine en Allemagne, 1650–1800," *Annales: E.S.C.* 37 (1982): 792.

¹⁰ Blair Worden, "Toleration and the Cromwellian Protectorate," in *Persecution and Toleration*, W. J. Sheils, ed. (Oxford, 1984), 224.

used religious metaphors of the early modern era likened evil to a contagious disease infecting the entire body social in which it resided. The usual remedy: cut off the infected part. Thus in the 1560s, Catholic crowds in Paris needed no specific provocation to attack suspected Huguenots; their very presence was viewed as a mortal threat to the city.¹¹ Likewise, in the course of the Dutch revolt against Spain, Protestant troops claimed repeatedly that military victory hinged on the eradication of Catholicism. Justifying a rampage in Delft, one group of soldiers argued that “Prince [William of Orange] could not be victorious as long as [Catholic priests] persisted with their idolatry in the town.”¹²

In the broader context, however, such extreme aggression was not the rule. All deviance did not offend equally; rather, the more public the act, the greater the “offense” or “scandal” it caused. This was as true of heretical behavior as it was of moral transgressions, which Europe’s churches handled quite differently depending on their public or private character.¹³ Public acts of worship were simply hard to avoid or ignore. By taking place in spaces designated as stages for social interaction—street, square, commons, churchyard—they invited reaction. Indeed, they forced witnesses to respond in an equally public manner, making evasion or neutrality almost impossible. Also, contemporaries endowed public rituals with representative powers, as enacting the will not just of individual participants but of the entire community in whose space they occurred. Every member of the community was believed, in the words of Olivier Christin, “to participate at least passively, as citizens, in the collective rite.”¹⁴ So, when a religious group enacted its beliefs in a public space, it was claiming possession not just of that space but of the entire community, appropriating the authority to speak and act for everyone, and making those of other faiths accomplices in rituals they rejected or even abhorred. Consequently, public devotions were far more provocative than private ones, and far more likely to become flashpoints for confessional conflict.

Catholic processions offer many obvious examples, and the crisis that struck the German city of Donauwörth in 1606–1607 illustrates neatly the close tie between their public character and their explosive potential. It began when the city’s small Catholic minority resolved to alter the pilgrimage procession to the village of Auchsesheim held annually on the Feast of St. Mark. The practice had been instituted in 1573 by the monks of Holy Cross Abbey, in the northern part of town.

¹¹ Barbara Diefendorf, “Prologue to a Massacre: Popular Unrest in Paris, 1557–1572,” *AHR* 90 (December 1985): 1071–72. On the concept of the “body social,” see the classic article by Natalie Zemon Davis, “The Sacred and the Body Social in Sixteenth-Century Lyon,” *Past and Present*, no. 90 (1981): 40–70. Recent research, though, does not support Davis’s association of the concept with only Catholic, not Protestant, notions of community.

¹² Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines: Confession and Community in Utrecht, 1578–1620* (Oxford, 1995), 60; Duke and Jones, “Towards a Reformed Polity,” 379.

¹³ On Catholic popular sensibilities on this point, see Wietse de Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul: Confession, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan* (Leiden, 2001), 63–67, 230–36; on Lutheran ones, David Warren Sabean, *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 1984), 116–17; on Calvinist ones, Heinz Schilling, *Civic Calvinism in Northwestern Germany and the Netherlands: Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries* (Kirksville, Mo., 1991), chap. 2. For a similar distinction in secular law (that of Augsburg), see Bernd Roeck, *Eine Stadt in Krieg und Frieden: Studien zur Geschichte der Reichsstadt Augsburg zwischen Kalenderstreit und Parität (1584–1648)* (Göttingen, 1989), 378.

¹⁴ Olivier Christin, *La paix de religion: L’autonomisation de la raison politique au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1997), 111 (speaking only of processions).

For thirty years, the marchers had always kept to back streets, eschewing all pomp and noise until they got out of the city, and the event had always passed peacefully. In 1603, however, the monks attempted to fly the banners of their abbey. When the town's Lutheran magistrates stopped them from doing so, the monks complained to the Imperial Aulic Council in Vienna, which in 1605 ruled in their favor. After that, the magistrates felt their hands were tied. Ordinary townsfolk, though, did not.

On St. Mark's Day, 1606, Donauwörth's Catholics unfurled their banners, hefted crosses, and set off through the city's chief arteries, chanting litanies as they marched. Lutherans responded by attacking the procession as it attempted to reenter through a city gate. Ripping banners and smashing crosses, they diverted the marchers from their planned route, forcing them to traverse some of the city's foulest alleys on their way back to the abbey where they began. Supported by Emperor Rudolph II, Donauwörth's Catholics tried again the next year. The city council pled vainly with both sides for restraint. This time, the procession never made it out of the abbey, which was surrounded by troops of guildsmen armed with clubs and harquebuses. Two men were beaten simply for refusing to participate in the siege. As in 1606, rioters directed their violence chiefly against symbols and routes—in other words, against the heightened publicity of the procession—demanding not that it be canceled but that it revert to “traditional” form. Rudolph responded by placing an imperial ban on the city, licensing Maximilian of Bavaria to occupy and re-Catholicize it by force.¹⁵

Such flashpoints, as the episode suggests, were capable of being at least partially defused. From the seventeenth through the entire eighteenth century, Dutch Catholics made regular group pilgrimages to Kevelaer, Uden, Handel, and other sites outside the United Provinces without provoking a violent response from the country's dominant Calvinists. They simply did what Donauwörth's Catholics refused to do: hide their banners and crosses and refrain from song until outside Dutch territory.¹⁶ Funeral processions and holiday celebrations might similarly be arranged so as to lessen the chance of a clash. But such piecemeal approaches had limited potential. So long as sacral acts occurred within communal space, they remained offensive to those of other religions.

One solution was for dissenters to practice their faith, but only outside the physical boundaries of the community. Although this practice left the community mixed in its sentiments, it preserved it, with regard to worship, as an exclusive enclave of the normative religion. Dissenters might, in a pinch, simply hold their services in the open air just outside of town. The “hedge preaching” that swept the Netherlands in June 1566 is the largest-scale instance known of this practice. Magistrates forbade Protestant sermons within the city walls but tacitly allowed them in the adjacent rural parts of the city's jurisdiction. Urban dwellers flocked to

¹⁵ Arturo da Carmignano, “La part de S. Laurent de Brindes dans le Ban de Donauwörth (1607),” *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 58 (1963): 460–86; Felix Stieve, *Der Ursprung des dreissigjährigen Krieges, 1607–1619* (Munich, 1875), 20, 41–45, 77–81. Bavaria's seizure of Donauwörth became a turning point for imperial politics, completing its polarization along religious lines by leading to the formation first of the Protestant Union, then of the Catholic League.

¹⁶ Marc Wingens, *Over de grens: De bedevaart van katholieke Nederlanders in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Nijmegen, 1994); P. J. Margry, “Processie versus stille omgang: Het probleem van de openbare godsdienstuitoefening buiten gebouwen en besloten plaatsen in Holland,” *Holland* 25 (1993): 174–96.

these sermons by the hundreds and even thousands, passing through the city gates in a regular mass exodus. Hedge preaching alone soon failed to satisfy Dutch Calvinists. At a crucial time, though, it gave their movement space in which to grow, and, as long as it lasted, no violence occurred.¹⁷

The same arrangement had a much longer history elsewhere. Since in the best circumstances open-air services were rudimentary, the form of *Auslauf*, as German speakers called it, that most widely prevailed involved travel to a nearby locale, where one's faith was exercised in a church or other suitable building. For over fifty years, beginning in the 1570s, Viennese Protestants trekked to Inzersdorf, Vösendorf, and above all to Hernals to worship. At Schloss Hernals, seat of the powerful Jörger family, a Lutheran minister conducted services either in the great hall of the castle or in its freestanding chapel (Figure 4).¹⁸ *Auslauf* was even more stable and institutionalized in the Holy Roman Empire, where in 1648 the Peace of Westphalia granted those who lived as dissidents in one German territory a constitutional right to attend services in amenable neighboring ones. With this clause, the peace formalized and extended a practice that had grown common decades earlier in the territorial patchwork of the German southwest. Calvinists in the bishopric of Speyer, for example, had been commuting every Sunday to neighboring villages in the Calvinist Palatinate since at least the 1590s. Catholics in the Palatinate made the same trip in reverse. For Lutherans who lived in the Catholic imperial city of Weil der Stadt, all roads led to orthodoxy: their town, with its tiny territory, was surrounded by the Lutheran duchy of Württemberg, where the urbanites became regular visitors as early as the 1570s.¹⁹

Such Sunday commuting had practical advantages that kept some groups contented for long periods: by utilizing the ecclesiastic infrastructure at hand, they avoided having to provide for themselves a place of worship, a priest or minister, and the appurtenances necessary for services. The primary appeal of the practice, however, lay in its power to accommodate religious diversity while maintaining the monopoly over religious life enjoyed by the established church of a locale. It removed dissenting worship from the communal space where it constituted a threat. To be sure, the practice did not avert all violence. An incident in Paris is particularly revealing. To placate the city's militant Catholics, and in recognition of the city's symbolic import as capital, in 1598 the Edict of Nantes forced Protestants to worship no closer than five leagues from the city. When Henry IV eased this restriction in 1606, permitting them to worship in nearby Charenton, his decision precipitated a riot: the following Sunday, a Catholic crowd attacked the Huguenots as they returned to town through St. Anthony's Gate. As in Donauwörth the same year, the violence occurred precisely where Huguenots penetrated the sacral space

¹⁷ See, among others, Phyllis Mack Crew, *Calvinist Preaching and Iconoclasm in the Netherlands, 1544–1569* (Cambridge, 1978).

¹⁸ Josef Karl Mayr, "Wiener Protestantengeschichte im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert," *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für die Geschichte des Protestantismus in Österreich* 70 (1954): 41–133, quotation on 103; Grete Mecenseffy and Hermann Rassl, *Die evangelischen Kirchen Wiens* (Vienna, 1980), 25–26; Mecenseffy, *Geschichte des Protestantismus in Österreich* (Graz, 1956), 56, 84, 140.

¹⁹ Marc Forster, *The Counter-Reformation in the Villages: Religion and Reform in the Bishopric of Speyer, 1560–1720* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1992), 132 n. 54, 136–37.

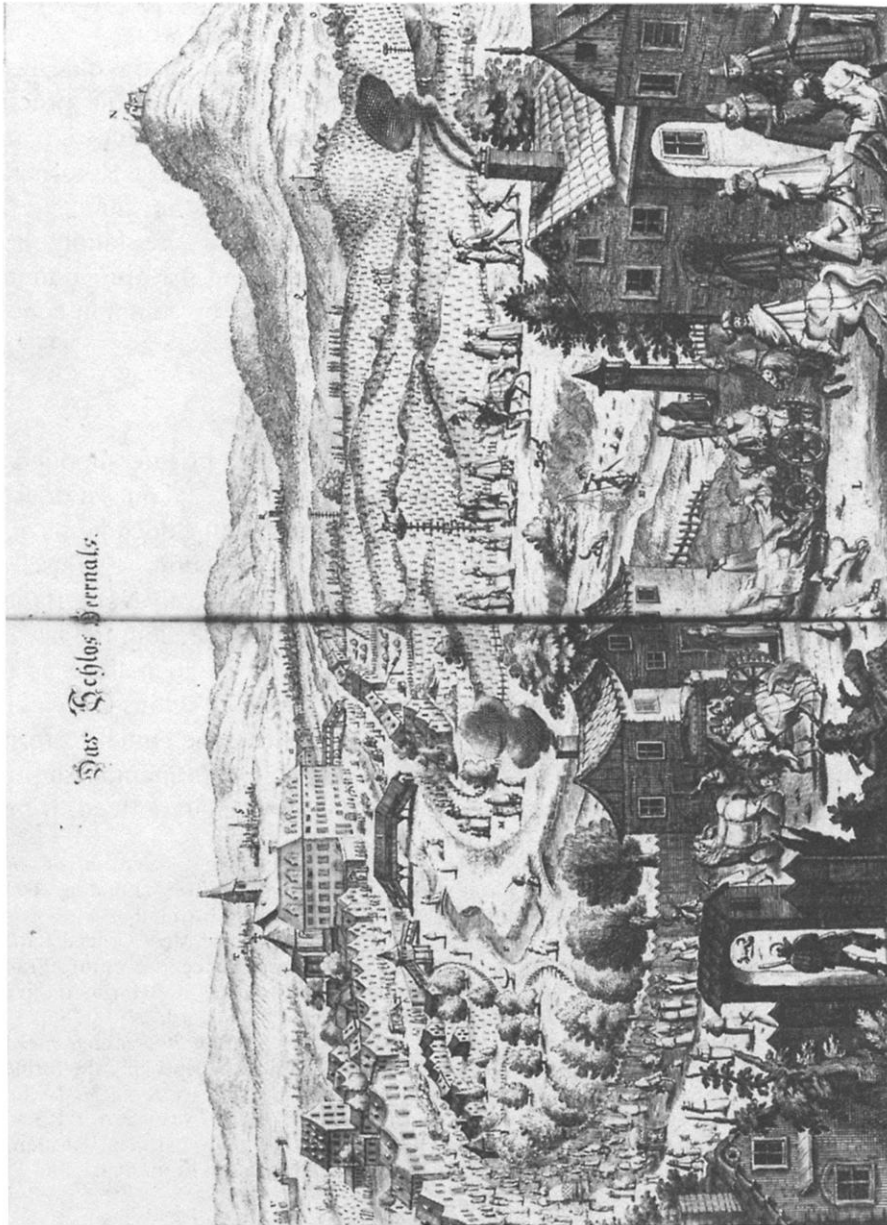


FIGURE 4: *Auslauf* to Schloss Hernalis, outside Vienna. Worshipers are depicted traveling from the city to services at the castle. Engraving circa 1620 by Matthias Merian the Elder, in *Topographia provinciarum austriacarum, Austriae Styriae, Carinthiae, Carniole, Tyrolis, etc.* (Frankfurt am Main, 1659). Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

of the city. Until then, keeping heresy at a sufficient distance had assuaged popular sentiment.²⁰

Worship outside the physical boundaries of the community could be arranged other ways as well. In the empire, entire satellite communities populated by religious dissenters grew in the vicinity of certain major urban centers, such as Altona near Hamburg and Mülheim near Cologne.²¹ It took geographic and juridical happenstance, though, to make this sort of arrangement work. It was most practical where jurisdictions were small and fragmented; while, for the elderly, the sick, and the poor, it could be a real hardship. But if dissenting religious practices were tolerable as long as they occurred outside communal space, the question arose what the boundaries of that space precisely were. Crucially, the post-Reformation period saw the emergence of a new sort of boundary, internal rather than external, delimiting that contested space: a line was drawn around the family home separating it from the public areas surrounding it. Public and private, communal and family spheres grew more distinct, and within the latter, by common consent, dissenters were allowed greater freedom of worship.

IN THE DUTCH REPUBLIC, this distinction between public and private supplied the key to religious toleration. It was a cultural distinction, not a legal one; it does not appear as such in the Union of Utrecht (1579) or in other defining documents of the polity.²² These drew a different contrast, rather, between freedom of conscience and freedom of worship. By virtue of Article 13 of the union, all Netherlanders enjoyed freedom of conscience—but that is the only religious freedom the law ever guaranteed them.²³ What did it entail? First, that people could believe as they wished; magistrates had no authority to examine or judge religious convictions. Second, no one could be required to attend Calvinist services; the Dutch Reformed Church would not assume the role of “established” church, with membership in it required by law. In theory, that was all freedom of conscience guaranteed. It made

²⁰ Elie Benoist, *The History of the Famous Edict of Nantes: Containing an Account of All the Persecutions, That have been in France From its First Publication to this Present Time* (London, 1694), 1: 419–20. Elsewhere in France similarly, how far out of town Huguenots had to travel in order to worship depended on how much power they wielded in a locale. Penny Roberts, “The Most Crucial Battle of the Wars of Religion? The Conflict over Sites for Reformed Worship in Sixteenth-Century France,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 89 (1998): 247–67; Elisabeth Labrousse, “Calvinism in France, 1598–1685,” in *International Calvinism 1541–1715*, Menna Prestwich, ed. (Oxford, 1985), 286.

²¹ François, “De l’uniformité à la tolérance”; Heinz Stoob, *Forschungen zum Städtewesen in Europa* (Cologne, 1970), 269–70. The specialized literature on Altona and Mülheim, especially the former, is large. Besides Whaley, *Hamburg*, see esp. Franklin Kopitzsch, *Grundzüge einer Sozialgeschichte der Aufklärung in Hamburg und Altona* (Hamburg, 1982); Clemens von Looz-Corswarem, “Köln und Mülheim am Rhein im 18. Jahrhundert: Reichsstadt und Flecken als wirtschaftliche Rivalen,” in *Civitatium Communitas: Studien zum europäischen Städtewesen*, Helmut Jäger, Franz Petri, and Heinz Quinn, eds. (Cologne, 1984), 543–64.

²² On the role of the distinction in Dutch culture more generally, see Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., and Adele Seeff, eds., *The Public and Private in Dutch Culture of the Golden Age* (Newark, N.J., 2000).

²³ S. Groenveld and H. L. Ph. Leeuwenberg, eds., *De Unie van Utrecht: Wordings en werking van een verbond en een verbondsacte* (The Hague, 1979), 34–35; see H. A. Enno van Gelder, *Vrijheid en onvrijheid in de Republiek: Geschiedenis der vrijheid van drukpers en godsdienst van 1572 tot 1798* (Haarlem, 1947); H. A. Enno van Gelder, *Getemperde vrijheid: Een verhandeling over de verhouding van Kerk en Staat in de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden en de vrijheid van meningsuiting in zake godsdienst, drukpers en onderwijs, gedurende de 17e eeuw* (Groningen, 1972).

no provision for dissenters acting on their beliefs by worshiping God in their own manner. In practice, though, much more ensued. The distinction between conscience and worship was recast into one between private and public piety, and the line between the two was drawn not around the conscience but around the family house.

Although never established, the Reformed Church played a unique role in Dutch society. Secular authorities sanctioned its teachings, paid its ministers, and watched over its meetings. The church provided pastoral care to the republic's soldiers and sailors, as it did to orphans and residents of other public institutions. It enjoyed exclusive use of the old parish churches and had an important say in educational, charitable, and marital matters. On Sundays, its ministers read mundane announcements from their pulpits, and in times of crisis led the community in penitential prayer. In their sermons, they called not just church members but the entire nation to account for its sins. The official spiritual organ of society, yet unestablished, the Dutch Reformed Church required a new label: Netherlanders called it the "public church." It monopolized public religious life in their land.²⁴

It was forbidden for non-Calvinists to challenge that monopoly. As individuals, they might manifest their piety in daily interactions with friends and neighbors, but as groups they could not assume a public profile.²⁵ They could not worship in buildings that looked like churches, nor could they organize open-air services. Indeed, Dutch law defined any worship that involved a gathering of different families as a public event, a "conventicle," and proscribed it. But within the confines of their own home, it permitted individuals and single families to do as they pleased. Catholics, for instance, could say prayers or recite the hours to themselves, and for this purpose they could use any devotional paraphernalia they desired, including books, paintings, and furniture. Neither the production and sale nor the purchase and ownership of such objects was illegal. Indeed, an early seventeenth-century Catholic chronicler reported "that almost every house belonging to a Catholic had a small room used as a place of prayer, [outfitted] with a pretty little altar and devout images, where [the family] went to read and pray."²⁶ Thus "freedom of conscience" really meant freedom of private, domestic worship. It meant, as the States General explained in a letter of 1644, that "for the sake of conscience every inhabitant could remain unmolested in his private home and family."²⁷ In this context, "family" meant not a unit of kinship so much as a household—a co-resident

²⁴ See Heinz Schilling, "Religion und Gesellschaft in der calvinistischen Republik der Vereinigten Niederlande: 'Öffentlichkeitskirche' und Säkularisation; Ehe und Hebammenwesen; Presbyterien und politische Partizipation," in *Kirche und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in deutschen und niederländischen Städten der werdenden Neuzeit*, Franz Petri, ed. (Cologne, 1980), 202–22; Arie Th. van Deursen, *Bavianen en slijkgeuzen: Kerk en kerkvolk ten tijde van Maurits en Oldebarnevelt* (Assen, 1974), chap. 2; Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*, 264–72.

²⁵ On daily interactions, see Willem Frijhoff, "Dimensions de la coexistence confessionnelle," in *The Emergence of Tolerance in the Dutch Republic*, Christiane Berkvens-Stevelinck, Jonathan I. Israel, and G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes, eds. (Leiden, 1997), 213–37.

²⁶ *Bijdragen voor de Geschiedenis van het Bisdome Haarlem* (1873): 319.

²⁷ Gelder, *Getemperde vrijheid*, 113. Compare the terms of the French Edict of Amboise (1563): "chacun pourra vivre et demeurer par tout en sa maison librement, sans être recherché ni molesté, forcé ni contraint pour le fait de sa conscience." André Stegmann, ed., *Edits des guerres de religion* (Paris, 1979), 34. See also Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*, 264–72.

group that could include servants, apprentices, wards, and even long-term guests, as well as relatives.²⁸

Such freedom of conscience did not license dissenters to meet in groups larger than a single family—to have, in other words, a church. In practice, however, domestic devotions served as a cover for something much more robust and elaborate, namely the *schuilkerk*. At their simplest, clandestine places of worship resembled the prayer room described by our chronicler. In Leiden, the Catholic sisters Van Santhorst described theirs as a cramped attic room with some candles, a picture of the Virgin, and a chest that doubled as an altar; whenever a priest came around to perform a Mass, they would send word to their Catholic neighbors to attend.²⁹ In the early years of the republic, such places of worship were legion: in 1619, Catholics in the Hague met in some fifty different houses, most with room for only a few worshipers at a time; in 1641, Leiden's 3,500 Catholics met in thirty.³⁰ Such dispersion maximized invisibility but made it exceedingly difficult for a small number of priests to serve the entire membership. So while the number of places of worship a denomination had in any particular locale varied with the number of its members there, it was also an inverse indicator of the degree of security it enjoyed. The trend over the seventeenth century was for consolidation to reduce the number of places of worship, as ad hoc prayer rooms and one-room chapels were replaced by larger, permanent *schuilkerken* with resident pastors. Catholics called these “stations,” replacements for the parish churches lost with the Reformation.

In the cities, such *schuilkerken* typically resembled the Hart, an adapted attic able to accommodate large numbers of people, with galleries creating multiple levels and proper accoutrements for worship.³¹ A report prepared in 1643 by the provincial court of Holland noted that such “formal chapels” usually had “very expensive altars, galleries [supported] on pillars, vaulted roofs, pews, organs, musicians and all sorts of musical instruments and, in sum, everything that might be asked of a chartered chapel.” They were “of so large a size and capacity that if the exercise of their religion were allowed publicly, they [the Catholics] could not ask for them to be larger or more decorous.”³² Recent reconstructions of *schuilkerk* interiors in Gouda and Amsterdam show that the report, while wishful in its thinking, was not indulging in hyperbole: by the middle of the seventeenth century, such interiors tended already to be richly decorated.³³ In cities, warehouses too

²⁸ See Naomi Tadmor, “The Concept of the Household-Family in Eighteenth-Century England,” *Past and Present*, no. 151 (1996): 111–40. On the Dutch family, see, among others, Donald Haks, *Huwelijk en gezin in Holland in de 17de en 18de eeuw* (Utrecht, 1985).

²⁹ *Bijdragen voor de Geschiedenis van het Bisdom Haarlem* 6 (1878): 73–74.

³⁰ W. P. C. Knuttel, “Vergaderplaatsen der Katholieken te 's-Gravenhage in de zeventiende eeuw,” *Archief voor Nederlandsche Kerkgeschiedenis* 5 (1895): 106–10, 109; Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 390.

³¹ Analysis of the architectural forms of Amsterdam's *schuilkerken* appears in R. Meischke, “Amsterdamse kerken van de zeventiende eeuw,” *Bulletin Koninklijke Nederlandse Oudheidkundige Bond* 12 (1959): kol. 85–130.

³² Gelder, *Getemperde vrijheid*, 118.

³³ Eck, *Kunst, twist en devotie*; Schillemans, “Zeventiende-eeuwse altaarstukken.” See Xander van Eck, “‘Haar uitstekend huis, en hoge kerke’: Enkele gegevens over de bouw, inrichting en aankleding van schuilkerken der jezuïeten in Gouda en andere Noordnederlandse steden,” in *Catalogus tentoonstelling Utrecht, Jezuiten in Nederland* (Utrecht, 1991), 41–52; P. van Dael, “Rooms-katholiek kerkzilver in de zeventiende eeuw: Functie en vorm,” in Guus van den Hout, *et al.*, *Kerkzilver uit de gouden eeuw* (Amsterdam, 1993), 7–20; R. Schillemans, “Schilderijen in Noordnederlandse katholieke kerken uit de eerste helft van de zeventiende eeuw,” *De zeventiende eeuw* 8 (1992): 41–52.



FIGURE 5: Aerial photograph of the *schuilkerk* Vrijburg, the former Remonstrant Church in Amsterdam, built 1629–1631, located between rows of houses. Size approximately 18 by 20 meters. Courtesy of KLM Aerocarto—Arnhem.

provided readily adaptable space; in rural districts, converted barns offered enough room for huge assemblies. Most *schuilkerken*, though, were located inside houses.

Some *schuilkerken* were actually separate structures newly built to function as churches. Typically, they were erected between rows of houses on ground formerly occupied by their back gardens. One, named Vrijburg, still stands. Used by Amsterdam's Remonstrants, it was built in 1629–1631 behind a row of houses facing the Keizersgracht (Figures 5, 6). A large brick-faced structure with a wooden frame, it had an elegant neoclassical interior with nave, side aisles, and two sets of galleries supported on columns. Eventually, the congregation bought most of the houses immediately surrounding it, using one as a parsonage and renting out the others.³⁴ Some Catholic congregations, like St. Jan Baptist in Gouda or St. Marie in Utrecht, built entire ecclesiastic complexes by accumulating real estate in this manner, providing housing not only for their pastor but for women known as *geestelijke maagden*, or *kloppen*, who lived together in the manner of a non-cloistered religious order and provided crucial services to the Catholic community.³⁵

³⁴ *Vrijburg: Geschiedenis en toekomst van een Amsterdamse schuilkerk* (Amsterdam, 1980).

³⁵ Marit Monteiro, *Geestelijke maagden: Leven tussen klooster en wereld in Noord-Nederland gedurende de zeventiende eeuw* (Hilversum, 1996). Much information on the number and fate of Catholic stations in the Netherlands can be gleaned from the reports sent to Rome by the apostolic vicars who headed the Holland Mission and by other church leaders; a great number of these were published in the late nineteenth century in *Archief voor de Geschiedenis van het Aartsbisdom Utrecht*.

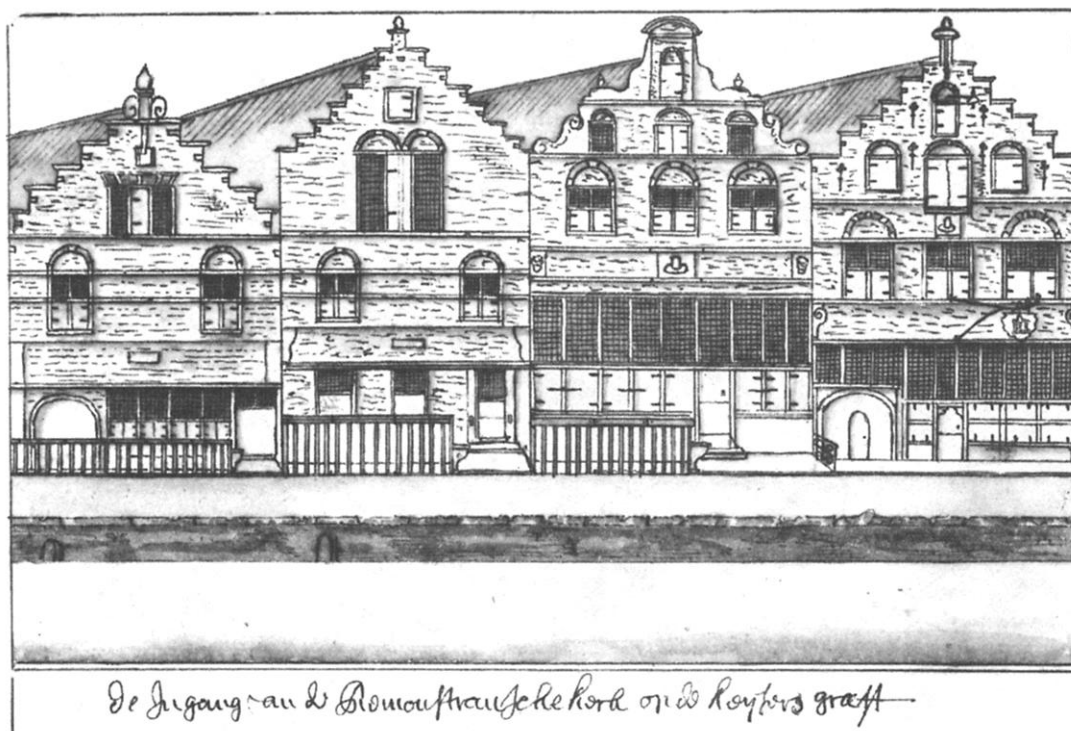


FIGURE 6: Keizersgracht 102–108: the row of houses in front of Vrijburg. Pen drawing by A. Schoemaker, circa 1630. Access to the church was via the two doors with rounded arches, which opened onto passageways leading back. Courtesy of Gemeentearchief Amsterdam.

Grand or humble, what all *schuilkerken* had in common was invisibility: they could not be identified as churches from any public thoroughfare. Their outsides lacked all the symbolic markers of a church: crosses, bells, icons, tower, splendor. The degree of difference between a *schuilkerk* and a proper church varied by denomination, depending on its attachment to such symbols: for Baroque Catholicism it could not have been greater, while at the other extreme Mennonites preferred very simple, plain structures. But *schuilkerken* not only lacked public presence as churches, they hid behind the façade (literally) of a different sort of structure. They did the same legally as well, appearing in deeds and mortgages as houses or barns or warehouses, and remaining the property of a private individual, usually an eminent member of the congregation.³⁶ The congregation did not exist as a legal entity, nor did the larger ecclesiastic organization to which it belonged. Its physical disguise, though, not its legal one, was the most essential mark of a *schuilkerk* and the key to its functional success. It avoided causing “offense” or “scandal” by not signaling its presence through visual and auditory symbols. Dutch

³⁶ Ownership of some *schuilkerken* (more in the eighteenth than the seventeenth century) was in the hands of their pastors, but this could lead to disputes and heavy estate taxes due when the latter died. Some, like the Hart, were owned for a time by persons of a different religion. Unlike urban churches, many rural ones were owned corporately, for example by a board of churchwardens. I. H. van Eeghen, “De eigendom van katholieke kerken in Amsterdam ten tijde van de Republiek,” *Bijdragen voor de geschiedenis van het Bisdom Haarlem* 64 (1957): 222–28.

authorities who informally authorized *schuilkerken* always insisted on such self-effacement. A committee of Amsterdam regents was unusually specific when in 1691 it set conditions under which one of the city's Catholic congregations could abandon its old *schuilkerk* for a newly built one. The former had grown so dilapidated that it threatened to collapse under the weight of the crowds squeezing into it.³⁷ Fearing disaster, the regents approved the move on condition that the pastor of the congregation, the Franciscan friar Egidius de Glabbais, agree to eleven points, including:

- (4) To avoid giving any offense, [Glabbais] promises that the entrance to the new permitted assembly place shall no longer be on the Joodebreestraat but behind, on the Burgwal, where it is less offensive
- (5) [Glabbais] [p]romises not to tolerate any sleds being parked in front of the assembly place
- (6) [Glabbais is] [t]o see to it that at the end of services no one stands around in front of the assembly place waiting for another person, nor shall [he] in any manner tolerate any poor people waiting around for alms in front of the assembly place
- (7) The undersigned shall take great care that his services begin and end at such times that no offense will be given by [Catholics and Reformed Protestants] meeting each other when coming from and going to church
- (8) The undersigned shall see to it that Catholics not pass through the street in a troop, nor with rosary, church book, or other offensive objects apparent, when going to or coming from the permitted assembly place.³⁸

All these stipulations were directed toward stripping the church of any presence *as church* in the public sphere.

Such invisibility was never more than superficial, however. In a society that exalted and demanded intimate relations between neighbors, unusual comings and goings could scarcely escape notice, no matter how hard one tried to conceal them. And many congregations felt secure enough that they did not try too hard; at times, passers-by in the street even could hear music emanating from services indoors.³⁹ When compiling information for their many remonstrances to secular authorities, Calvinist ministers never had difficulty ascertaining the precise location of the *schuilkerken* in their community. And their remonstrances offered no surprises to authorities. In fact, everyone either knew where they were or could find out easily enough. Guidebooks, such as Philip von Zesen's *Amsterdam* (1664), even indicated

³⁷ In 1690, a *schuilkerk* in the Hague did actually collapse during a service, with loss of life, a fact the regents had in mind when approving the move. The ad hoc architecture made some *schuilkerken* positively dangerous. One in London collapsed in 1623. See Dalmatius van Heel and Bonfilius Knipping, *Van schuilkerk tot zuilkerk: De geschiedenis van de Mozes- en Aäronkerk te Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, 1941), 117–19; Alexandra Walsham, “‘The Fatal Vesper’: Providentialism and Anti-Popery in Late Jacobean London,” *Past and Present*, no. 144 (1994): 36–87.

³⁸ Gemeentearchief Amsterdam, 5024, inv. nr. 2: Resolutiën van Burgemeesters 1649–1698, fol. 279 r–v (1691). See Heel and Knipping, *Van schuilkerk tot zuilkerk*, 109–19, 336–38. A similar contract was drafted in 1694 for a *schuilkerk* on the Nieuwezijds Achterburgwal; Eeghen, “De eigendom van katholieke kerken in Amsterdam,” esp. 217, 235.

³⁹ See, for example, the complaint of Amsterdam's Calvinist consistory in July 1676 about the Jesuit station on the Raamgracht, where music was made “met open deuren,” that is, with the hoist-doors in the front façade open: H. Zantkuyl, “De schuilkerk der Jezuiten op de Raamgracht,” *Amstelodamum* 46 (1959): 29–33, 33. In 1656, the consistory complained of the Catholic *schuilkerken* generally that “one can hear from outside, on the street, and from neighboring houses [the] organs, viols, and other instruments” played in them; Eeghen, “De eigendom van katholieke kerken in Amsterdam,” 269.

their locations for the benefit of tourists, on whose itinerary they regularly figured. Jan Wagenaar gave a complete rundown of them in his 1765 description of the city.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the pretense of privacy and domesticity embodied in the *schuilkerk* offered a working solution to the dilemma posed by religious diversity. Keeping dissent out of sight and stripping it of any symbolic presence preserved the monopoly of the Reformed Church over public religious life. It thus maintained a semblance, or fiction, of religious unity.

The arrangement did subject dissenters to burdens and harassments. They still had to pay “recognition fees” to local law enforcement officials, the price the latter charged for going along with the fiction. It also did not spare them from having their services raided by zealous, anxious, or extortionate officials. Particularly when the war against Spain went poorly, fears rose of a fifth column of Catholic traitors, prompting officials to crack down on Catholic worship. After the conclusion in 1609 of the Twelve Years’ Truce, though, such crackdowns became less frequent, and after the Peace of Westphalia ended the long conflict in 1648, they were rare indeed. As a mechanism for the practice of religious tolerance—not the only, but the most important, such mechanism in the republic—the *schuilkerk* worked.

WHILE THE *schuilkerk* IS A WELL-KNOWN DUTCH PHENOMENON, few scholars have paid attention to its many counterparts elsewhere in Europe. Regardless of the religious groups involved, the formula for tolerance it embodied proved capable of application wherever local communities struggled to reconcile an official orthodoxy with religious diversity. Catholic majorities might tolerate Protestant minorities through this formula just as easily as the reverse. In Catholic Cologne, for example, Lutherans worshiped from the late sixteenth century onward in a “secret, oppressed house-church,” as did Reformed Protestants.⁴¹ The latter, in fact, had two and sometimes three congregations—for German, Dutch, and French speakers. The existence of these groups was an open secret. When the writer P. de Blainville, visiting Cologne in 1705, attended a service, he “was completely amazed to see such a crowd of people there, for the hall was entirely full, above and below—as many people there as was room for, their number reaching at least five to six hundred.”⁴² Yet discretion remained crucial: riots broke out in 1708 when Brandenburg’s ambassador sent written invitations to Protestants to attend services in his home. They broke out again in 1787, when the city council gave permission for Protestants to build a big new “prayer and school house.”⁴³ Elsewhere in the empire,

⁴⁰ Christian Gellinek, ed., *Europas erster Baedeker: Filip von Zesens Amsterdam 1664* (New York, 1988), 180, 191–95, 293–95, 359–61; Wagenaar, *Amsterdam*, vol. 3, book 3; see likewise *Wegwijzer door Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, 1713). Von Zesen included synagogues and Protestant *schuilkerken* but not Catholic ones.

⁴¹ Leo Schwing, “Die religiöse und wirtschaftliche Entwicklung des Protestantismus in Köln während des 17. Jahrhunderts: Ein Versuch,” *Annalen des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein* 85 (1908): 14.

⁴² Looz-Corswarem, “Köln und Mülheim,” 548. Blainville was probably a pseudonym.

⁴³ Looz-Corswarem, “Köln und Mülheim,” 562; Al. Meister, “Der preußische Residentenstreit in Köln, ein Versuch zur Einführung des reformierten Gottesdienstes,” *Annalen des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein* 70 (1901): 1–30; E. Heinen, “Der Kölner Toleranzstreit (1787–1789),” *Jahrbuch des kölnischen Geschichtsvereins* 44 (1973): 67–86.

clandestine churches accommodated groups other than the three recognized confessions. Remonstrants in Glückstadt received official permission in 1624 “to exercise and practice their religion . . . behind closed doors.” Mennonites in Königsberg were told in 1722 by the Prussian government they “could hold their gatherings for their worship in a private house, but only in complete quiet, without [causing] rumor.”⁴⁴

Perhaps the most extraordinary case of reliance on clandestine churches was Ireland, where the religion of the majority of the population was illegal. Except in the 1640s and 1650s, when persecution peaked, Irish Catholics were widely able to operate semi-secret chapels that the English called “mass houses.” In the countryside, these were mostly cottages, barns, or sheds, built of mud, thatch-roofed, and often still used for their original purpose. In cities, they were more commodious. The interior of the Jesuit chapel that operated in Dublin in the 1620s made a grand impression on visiting Englishman Sir William Brereton:

the pulpit in this church was richly adorned with pictures, and so was the high altar, which was advanced with steps, and railed out like cathedrals; upon either side thereof was there erected places for confession; no fastened seats were in the middle or body hereof, nor was there any chancel; but that it might be more capacious, there was a gallery erected on both sides and at the lower end.⁴⁵

Such galleries, making the most of a restricted space, were a feature common to urban *schuilkerken* across Europe. The eighteenth century witnessed a proliferation of Irish mass houses and general improvement in their quality, yet care was still taken to keep them unobtrusive. Most of those in Dublin were converted stables or warehouses located on narrow lanes behind other buildings.⁴⁶ In County Cork, the magistrates of Cloyne and Charleville blocked the erection of mass houses “within view of the churches in those towns.” A Kildare rector had a mass house torn down because it stood “in the direct road to my church, and not far from it.”⁴⁷ Like the 1691 Amsterdam instructions, these actions demonstrate that location as well as appearance determined how public or private a clandestine place of worship was

⁴⁴ Walter Grossmann, “Städtisches Wachstum und religiöse Toleranzpolitik am Beispiel Neuwied,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 62/63 (1980–81): 221; Erich Randt, *Die Mennoniten in Ostpreussen und Litauen bis zum Jahre 1772* (Königsberg, 1912), 18.

⁴⁵ C. Litton Falkiner, *Illustrations of Irish History and Topography, Mainly of the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1904), 382.

⁴⁶ “Report on the State of Popery, Ireland 1731,” *Archivium Hibernicum* 1–4 (1912): 10–27, 108–56, 124–59, 131–77; John Brady and Patrick J. Corish, *The Church under the Penal Code* (Dublin, 1971), 58–69; Patrick J. Corish, *The Catholic Community in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Walkinstown, Dublin, 1981), 29; S. J. Connolly, *Religion, Law, and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland, 1660–1760* (Oxford, 1992), 151, 289; Michael A. Mullett, *Catholics in Britain and Ireland, 1558–1829* (New York, 1998), 65. On Dublin’s mass houses, see Patrick Fagan, *The Second City: Portrait of Dublin, 1700–1760* (Dublin, 1986), 109–33; Nuala Burke, “A Hidden Church? The Structure of Catholic Dublin in the Mid-Eighteenth Century,” *Archivium Hibernicum* 32 (1974): 85. Current “revisionist” historiography paints less black a picture of conditions for Catholics in eighteenth-century Ireland than did earlier writings; it emphasizes that the penal laws were directed against Catholic wealth and power far more than against Catholic worship. See David George Boyce and Alan O’Day, *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy* (London, 1996). The new consensus is captured by the title (and contents) of T. P. Power and Kevin Whelan, eds., *Endurance and Emergence: Catholics in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (Blackrock, County Dublin, 1990). In Ulster, however, open-air services remained the rule well into the eighteenth century.

⁴⁷ “Report on the State of Popery,” 2 (1913): 127; and 4 (1915): 159. See Connolly, *Religion, Law, and Power*, 289.

perceived to be. They highlight again, though, the special power of the visual: even disguised, a mass house in plain sight of a church was viewed as a challenge.

In addition to close parallels like the mass house, three variants on the *schuilkerk* also emerged outside the Netherlands. All three were obscured by an architectural façade, located within residential space, and built on a foundation of domestic devotional practices. At the same time, they differed from ordinary *schuilkerken* as the domiciles in which they were situated differed from the homes of ordinary burghers and peasants.

One was the manorial chapel. Well before the Reformation, Europe's landed elites had developed a tradition of domestic worship. Medieval custom and canon law had permitted them, and with them their households, to worship at home on condition that they attend their parish church on major festivals.⁴⁸ After the Reformation, some elites extended this seigneurial privilege in an unprecedented way, using it as a vehicle for dissident devotions. In England and Scotland, "recusant" gentry and peers established Catholic chapels in their manor houses. These illegal chapels were served by missionary priests who resided on the manor semi-permanently. As of 1701, Bishop Leyburn counted 219 peers and gentry who kept such resident chaplains.⁴⁹ The latter provided pastoral care first and foremost to the manor's household, usually a larger unit than non-elite households, but recusant elites commonly invited tenants and other dependants to attend their services as well. These were the only Catholic services conducted in some regions, especially in the rural south of both countries. Carved out of residential rooms, the chapels themselves tended to grow larger and less hidden over time. In the early seventeenth century, they were usually sheltered in some cramped attic. By 1700, the norm was for a suite of commodious second-floor rooms to serve as chapel, sacristy, and lodgings for the priest. By 1750, the chapel had completed its descent to ground level.⁵⁰

As John Bossy has shown, reliance on manorial chapels had far-reaching consequences for the social character of English Catholicism. Among others, it left priests captive to the needs and desires of the gentry, on whom they depended for lodgings, funds, protection, and places to conduct services. In this way, it shifted fundamentally the balance of power between clergy and laity. By the same token, it gave female members of the gentry—the women who ran such recusant households—an unusual leadership role within the Catholic community, at least until the 1620s. Other scholars have noted a similar empowerment of women in the early phases of Scottish and Irish recusancy. In the Dutch Republic, it took a few decades

⁴⁸ J. C. H. Aveling, *The Handle and the Axe: The Catholic Recusants in England from Reformation to Emancipation* (London, 1976), 41–42.

⁴⁹ John Miller, *Popery and Politics in England, 1660–1688* (Cambridge, 1973), 34.

⁵⁰ Roderick O'Donnell, "The Architectural Setting of Challoner's Episcopate," in *Challoner and His Church: A Catholic Bishop in Georgian England*, Eamon Duffy, ed. (London, 1981), 55–70; Aveling, *Handle and the Axe*, esp. 121, 141–43, 228; John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570–1850* (New York, 1976), chaps. 2, 3, 6, 7, 10; John Bossy, "English Catholics after 1688," in *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England*, Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel, and Nicholas Tyacke, eds. (Oxford, 1991), 369–87, 375; Bryan Little, *Catholic Churches since 1623: A Study of Roman Catholic Churches in England and Wales from Penal Times to the Present Decade* (London, 1966), 21–44. On Scotland, see esp. Peter F. Anson, *Underground Catholicism in Scotland, 1622–1878* (Montrose, 1970); Mullett, *Catholics in Britain and Ireland*, 40, 104, 113–17.

for the Catholic Church hierarchy to establish effective control over *schuilkerk* congregations, and priests always remained dependent on the financial and practical assistance of *kloppen*. Such shifts in power away from the usual wielders of religious authority tended, however, to be reversed or at least mitigated over time.⁵¹

Unlike British recusants, the Calvinist nobility of France had a legal right to their chapels, known as *églises de fief*. Compared to those in Britain, these chapels played only a secondary role in sustaining religious dissent, for outside regions like the Cévennes French Calvinism was primarily an urban movement. Until its revocation in 1685, the Edict of Nantes, like earlier toleration edicts, permitted Huguenots to have public places of worship in the suburbs of certain cities. The edict underlined the public quality of worship in them by specifying that “the people may be summoned [to services], even by the ringing of bells.” The edict also extended to Huguenot nobles the right “to have in . . . their houses . . . the exercise of the said [Reformed] religion as long as they are resident there, and in their absence, their wives or families.”⁵² Nobles with powers of high justice could invite as many people as they wished to these domestic services. Nobles without such powers were limited in theory to a maximum of thirty guests, but in practice they often ignored the restriction, welcoming tenants, clients, friends, and others.⁵³

In the Middle Ages, Europe’s nobles had modeled their chapels after those of their rulers. In the early modern era, most rulers still had court chapels, and in those exceptional lands where their religion differed from the official one, these too became protected centers of religious dissent. They constituted a second variant on the *schuilkerk*. In England, it was not kings, strictly speaking, but their consorts who had the first such private chapels. Queen Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles I, had two, both designed by Inigo Jones: Somerset House Chapel and, at St. James’s Palace, Marlborough House Chapel.⁵⁴ In the Holy Roman Empire, the Peace of Westphalia allowed a Lutheran ruler of a Reformed territory, and vice-versa, “to have court preachers of his confession . . . with him and in his residence.”⁵⁵ When in 1697 Friedrich August I of Saxony converted to Catholicism, he extended this provision to the Protestant-Catholic divide, arranging for Catholic services in his

⁵¹ Bossy, *English Catholic Community*, 49–59, 110–21, 149–81; Alasdair F. B. Roberts, “The Role of Women in Scottish Catholic Survival,” *Scottish Historical Review* 70 (1991): 129–50; Mullett, *Catholics in Britain and Ireland*, 117–19; Ute Lotz-Heumann, *Die doppelte Konfessionalisierung in Irland: Konflikt und Koexistenz im 16. und in der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen, 2000), 296–300; Monteiro, *Geestelijke maagden*, 75–121. Compare Rona Johnston Gordon, “Patronage and Parish: The Nobility and the Recatholicization of Lower Austria,” in *The Reformation in Eastern and Central Europe*, Karin Maag, ed. (Aldershot, 1997), 223; Liliane Crété, *Les Camisards* (Paris, 1992), 46–48; Renee Levine Melammed, *Heretics or Daughters of Israel? The Crypto-Jewish Women of Castile* (New York, 1999).

⁵² English translation in Roland Mousnier, *The Assassination of Henry IV: The Tyrannicide Problem and the Consolidation of the French Absolute Monarchy in the Early Seventeenth Century* (London, 1973), 353, 362, 320, 321.

⁵³ For examples, see Janine Garrisson, *Les Protestants au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1988), 39; P. Roberts, “Most Crucial Battle,” 307–08. On the role of these manorial chapels, see Jean Quéniart, *La révocation de l’Édit de Nantes: Protestants et catholiques en France de 1598 à 1685* (Paris, 1985), 30–31, 103, 123; Louis Pérouas, *Le diocèse de La Rochelle de 1648 à 1724: Sociologie et pastorale* (Paris, 1964), 304, 312–13.

⁵⁴ Aveling, *Handle and the Axe*, 223–30; Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1996), 58; Little, *Catholic Churches since 1623*, 21–23; Miller, *Popery and Politics*, 25.

⁵⁵ Konrad Müller, ed., *Instrumenta pacis Westphalicae—Die Westfälischen Friedensverträge: Vollst. lateinischer Text mit Übers. der wichtigsten Teile und Regesten* (Bern, 1975), Latin text 47, German 133.

various residences. Prince Karl Alexander of Württemberg did likewise, establishing private Catholic chapels in Stuttgart and Ludwigsburg when in 1733 he succeeded to the Lutheran duchy. Württemberg's estates, which paid for construction of the two chapels, stipulated that Catholic services be held nowhere else and that no "symbols and activities associated with public worship" accompany them.⁵⁶

Embassy chapels constituted a third variant on the *schuilkerk*. In the wake of the Reformation, a new rule of diplomacy emerged allowing ambassadors serving in lands whose religion differed from their own to maintain within their residence a chapel for their family's use. Because ambassadorial residences, following the early modern norm, served both as lodgings and workplace, such chapels came to be called embassy chapels. Their legitimacy, though, remained rooted in the domestic: in theory, they and their chaplains could serve only the ambassador and his household. Fuss was rarely made if compatriots of the ambassador—merchants abroad on business, for example—also attended services. Whether foreigners from other countries might do the same was a more sensitive point. But by far the most contentious issue was whether native dissidents could attend embassy services, and whether such services could be conducted in the local language by native clerics. In London, this issue provoked repeated clashes, some of them violent, in the streets surrounding the Spanish, French, and Venetian embassies. In several of these incidents, local officials tried to arrest natives emerging at the end of services, setting off diplomatic protests and embarrassing the royal government. Yet despite occasional skirmishes and a more constant tension, London's embassy chapels functioned effectively as places of worship and points of protection for English Catholics (Figure 7).⁵⁷ So it went on the continent as well. The Dutch alone sponsored embassy chapels in twelve different capitals, while for Emperor Leopold I, the whole point of maintaining ambassadors in various Protestant cities was "that Catholic services might be held to comfort the Catholics of that area, and to promote the further growth of this religion."⁵⁸

In the eighteenth century, there emerged a new legal principle, "extraterritoriality," that legitimized embassy chapels. It stipulated that one was to "assume or pretend that the ambassador and the precincts of his embassy stood as if on the soil of his homeland, subject only to its laws." By this principle, an embassy chapel did not violate the religious laws of its host country because it did not stand on the host

⁵⁶ As paraphrased in Paul Friedrich Stälin, "Das Rechtsverhältnis der religiösen Gemeinschaften und der fremden Religionsverwandten in Württemberg nach seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung," *Württembergische Jahrbücher für Statistik und Landeskunde* (1868), 160. On Saxony, see Eduard Hegel, "Zum Verhältnis der Konfessionen in Deutschland am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts," in *Zwischen Polemik und Irenik: Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis der Konfessionen im späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert*, Georg Schwaiger, ed. (Göttingen, 1977), 13–14.

⁵⁷ O'Donnell, "Architectural Setting," 65–69; Gordon Rupp, *Religion in England, 1688–1791* (Oxford, 1986), 191–92; T. G. Holt, "The Embassy Chapels in Eighteenth Century London," *The London Recusant* 2 (1972): 19–37; William Raleigh Trimble, "The Embassy Chapel Question, 1625–1660," *Journal of Modern History* 18 (1946): 97–107; Alfred van der Essen, "Les Catholiques Londiniens et l'Ambassade d'Espagne, 1633–37," *Scrinium Lovaniense*, series 4, 24 (1961): 475–85; John Bossy, *Giordano Bruno and the Embassy Affair* (New Haven, Conn., 1991); Albert J. Loomie, "London's Spanish Chapel before and after the Civil War," *Recusant History* 18 (1987): 402–10.

⁵⁸ Whaley, *Hamburg*, 54; O. Schutte, *Repertorium der nederlandse vertegenwoordigers residerende in het buitenland 1584–1810* ('s-Gravenhage, 1976), 47–57, 82–84, 121–22, 148–49, 157–58, 201, 257–58, 278–80, 296–99, 315–18, 336–41, 354, 403–05, 432–33, 461–62.

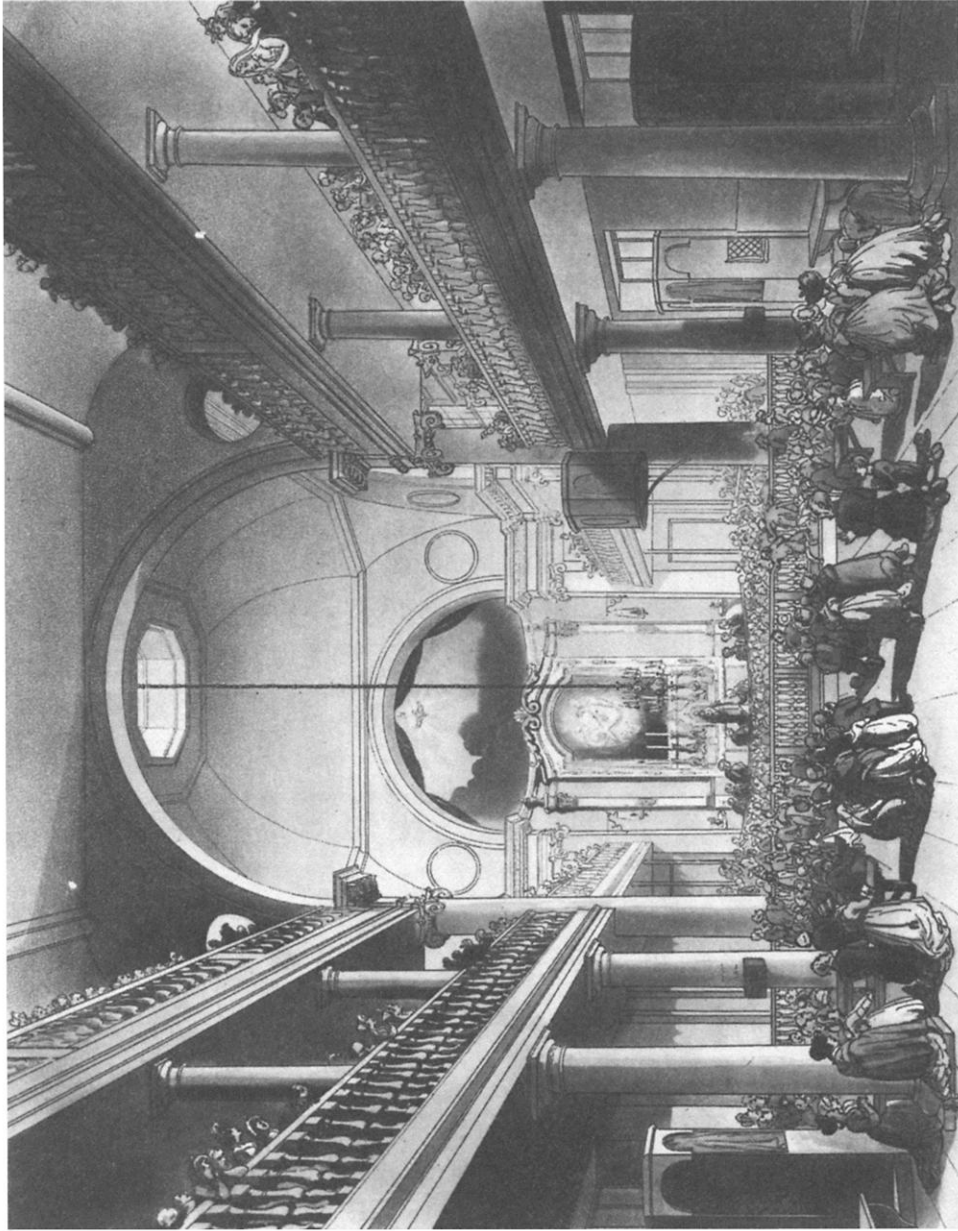


FIGURE 7: The Sardinian Embassy Chapel, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, London. Designed by Jean Baptist Jacque, 1760. Etching from R. Ackermann, *The Microcosm of London*, vol. 1 (London, 1808). Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

country's territory. But, as the legal historian Edward Adair has shown, neither court rulings nor treaty stipulations nor established legal principles lent protection to embassy chapels at the time of their proliferation. Extraterritoriality was an *ex post facto* justification, developed in no small part to rationalize the already established practice of tolerating embassy chapels. Indeed, the embassy chapel question was "the largest single factor in preparing men's minds to accept this extraordinary fiction."⁵⁹

The *schuilkerk* formula proved applicable to Jews as well as dissenting Christians. Operating under the cover of domesticity, scores of clandestine synagogues functioned in Alsace from the late seventeenth century. These synagogues consisted initially of rooms in private homes. Often upstairs, the rooms were usually richly appointed, with separate spaces for men and women. A rare survival, the remains of one dating from 1723 can still be seen in Traenheim (Figure 8). The private character of these "oratories" was underlined in 1701 by the intendant of Alsace, Le Pelletier de la Houssaye. Investigating a complaint made by an abbé that the Jews of Reichshoffen were practicing their religion publicly, the intendant found precisely the opposite: "The worship which the Jews established in Reichshoffen perform is not as public as one would have you believe. There is no synagogue *per se*, only, by a custom long established in this province, when there are seven Jewish families in one locale, those who compose them assemble, without scandal, in a house of their sect for readings and prayers."⁶⁰

As the Jewish population rose, oratories multiplied and a certain number of houses were renovated internally to function as community centers, incorporating a synagogue and school. However, they continued to look externally like the houses in their neighborhood.⁶¹ As elsewhere, though, so in Alsace the line between public and private was more a matter of perception and negotiation than of bricks and timber. A conflict erupted in 1725 when the Jews of three villages, Biesheim, Wintzenheim, and Hagenthal, were accused of building illegal new synagogues. They claimed in response to have merely enlarged or "moved" their existing places of prayer. In the end, the Conseil Souverain of Alsace ordered that the structures be demolished.⁶²

In Hamburg, negotiations between Christians and Jews involved threats of violence as well as appeals to authority.⁶³ Worshiping initially in private homes, Hamburg's Sephardic community dated to the 1580s. In 1650, it received permission to hold prayer gatherings of up to fifteen families, although, in order to avoid notice, only four or five families were to enter or leave at a time. This license emboldened the community, which began to consider building a larger, more formal

⁵⁹ Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (Boston, 1971), 272, 280–81; E. A. Adair, *The Extraterritoriality of Ambassadors in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York, 1929).

⁶⁰ Freddy Raphaël and Robert Weyl, *Juifs en Alsace: Culture, société, histoire* (Toulouse, 1977), 134.

⁶¹ Michel Rothé and Max Warschawski, *Les synagogues d'Alsace et leur histoire* (Jerusalem, 1992); Jonathan I. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism 1550–1750* (Oxford, 1989), 102–03, 169, 237.

⁶² Raphaël and Weyl, *Juifs en Alsace*, 135–37.

⁶³ This paragraph and the following one draw heavily on Whaley, *Hamburg*, esp. 75–79, 91–92, 99–103. See also Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), 9–11.

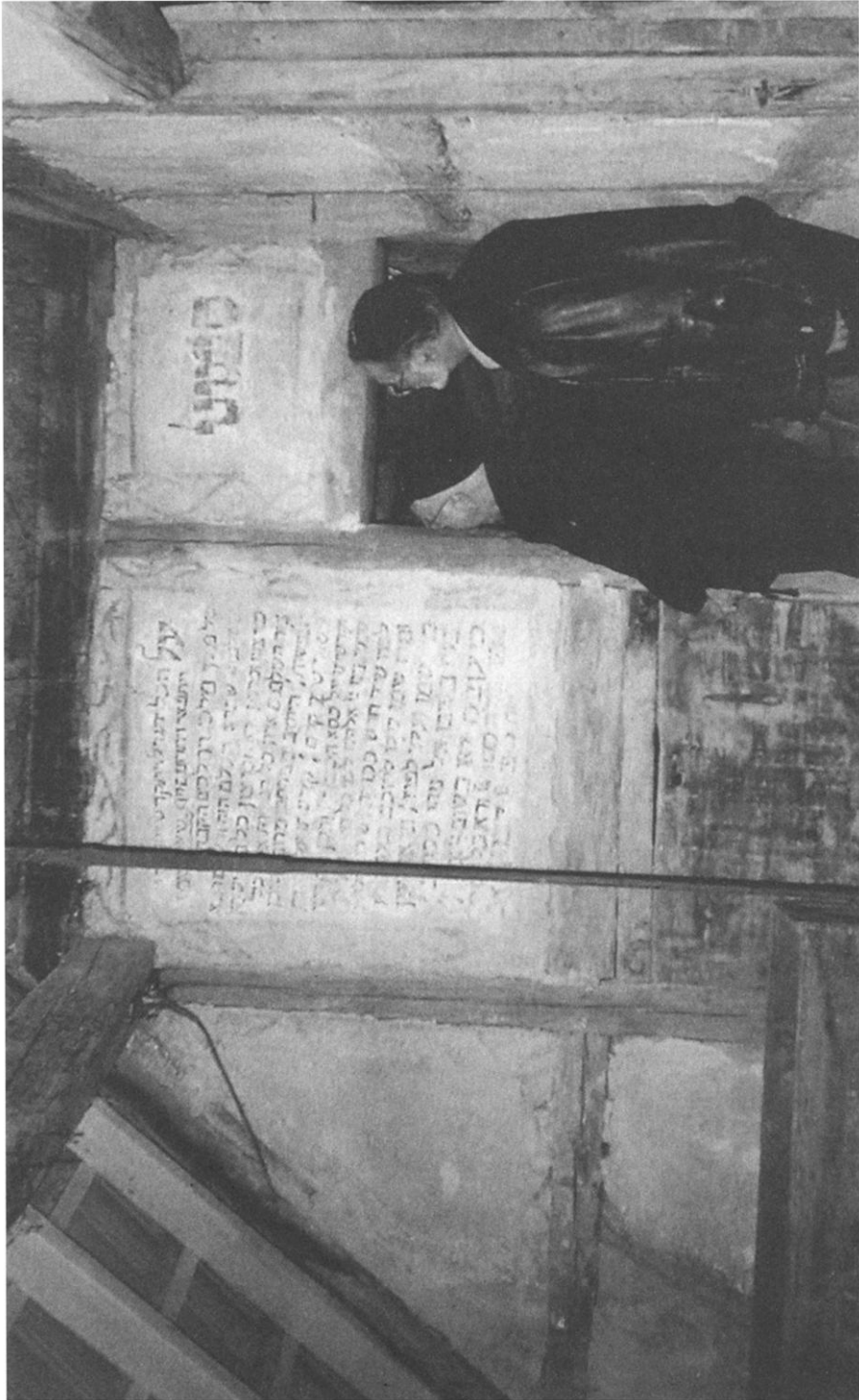


FIGURE 8: Attic synagogue in Traenheim, Alsace, interior view. Size 5.5 by 4.5 meters. The space was adapted to serve as synagogue in 1723 despite the vociferous objections of the local pastor. Modern photograph, courtesy of Bernard Keller.

place of worship. Its intentions evoked howls of protest from Hamburg's Lutheran clergy, who stirred up popular sentiment with anti-Semitic sermons. In 1672, the community went ahead anyway with plans to enlarge an existing prayer house. Immediately, riots threatened to break out, and the captains of the city's militia warned the government that their men could not be counted on to suppress them. Taking preemptive action, the senate soon closed the synagogue, forcing the Sephardim to content themselves once again with small unofficial prayer houses.

A similar drama unfolded in the eighteenth century with the city's Ashkenazic community. A *Judenreglement* issued by the senate in 1710 forbade the Ashkenazim to have any "public buildings" but permitted them to worship privately "as long as they refrained from ostentatiously provoking their neighbours by using ceremonial horns or trumpets [a reference to the shofar] or by publicly displaying liturgical lanterns."⁶⁴ This almost transparent cloak sufficed to keep the peace, and by 1732 the growing community had fourteen clandestine synagogues. In 1746, however, the building of a large new synagogue provoked disturbances. Hamburg's senate had tacitly approved the construction, and a strategically unobtrusive site had been chosen in a narrow alley on the periphery of town. Inevitably, though, the work of construction attracted attention. When formal remonstrances by the citizenry failed to sway the senate, an angry crowd gathered around the half-completed building, threatening to demolish it. Cowed, the senate ordered its dismantling.

BY GIVING JEWS PERMISSION TO BUILD a larger clandestine synagogue, Hamburg's senate was colluding with a religious minority to redraw the line between private and public worship. By mobilizing and threatening violence, Hamburg's Lutheran crowds restored the line to its earlier position. As was typical, the negotiation involved not just religious dissidents and local authorities but also orthodox citizens and clergy. In rural areas and less autonomous cities, such negotiations involved other actors as well: princes, estates, nobles. Such popular mobilization as occurred in Hamburg, though, marked a failure of official policy. Rulers generally sought to preempt it and the challenge it entailed to their authority by regulating carefully the activity of dissenting religious congregations. Silently gauging what the orthodox of their community might, if only grudgingly, assent to, they set boundaries to the private sphere within which those congregations operated. For example, Amsterdam's regents sought to ensure that Glabbais's Catholic congregation would "avoid giving any offense" to Calvinists; Prussia's government stipulated that Mennonite worship had to be conducted "in complete quiet, without [causing] rumor"; in approving Jewish worship, the Alsatian intendant noted that it caused no "scandal." This vocabulary reveals the sensitivity of officials to popular opinion. It signals a negotiation conducted, in the usual course of events, discursively rather than physically.

The points in dispute in these negotiations indicate the criteria early modern Europeans applied to distinguish public from private worship: how many people attended the services, what sort of people attended, when services were held, the

⁶⁴ Whaley, *Hamburg*, 92.

size of the chapel, its location and appearance, the presence of beggars or parked vehicles outside it, the number of people entering or leaving at a time and how they conducted themselves, whether bells rang or invitations were sent to announce services. Some of these criteria have the same valence in modern Western culture as they did in early modern, but others do not. Invitations are today deemed markers of a private, not public, function, and hundreds of people attending does not make it any more public. Similarly, churches today look like churches, synagogues like synagogues, and mosques like mosques, yet they remain private organizations. They are considered private above all because of their status as non-governmental, voluntary associations, a status they share with business corporations and similar bodies.

Some intellectuals formulated such a definition of privacy as early as the seventeenth century. Among the first, Roger Williams argued in 1644 that a church or any other “company of worshippers” was “like unto a body or college of physicians in a city; like unto a corporation, society or company of East India or Turkey merchants, or any other society or company . . . The essence or being of the City, and so the well-being and peace thereof, is essentially distinct from these particular societies.”⁶⁵ John Locke similarly emphasized the voluntary, associative nature of churches. Yet even most Enlightenment philosophes saw a need for some sort of religious establishment, civil if not Christian. Eighteenth-century practice, more even than theory, shows the continued functioning of an older definition of private worship, based on symbols and other sensory signals, especially visual ones. Throughout that century, *schuilkerken* and their equivalents continued to function, new ones to be built, and contests to occur over the boundaries of the private sphere they constituted.

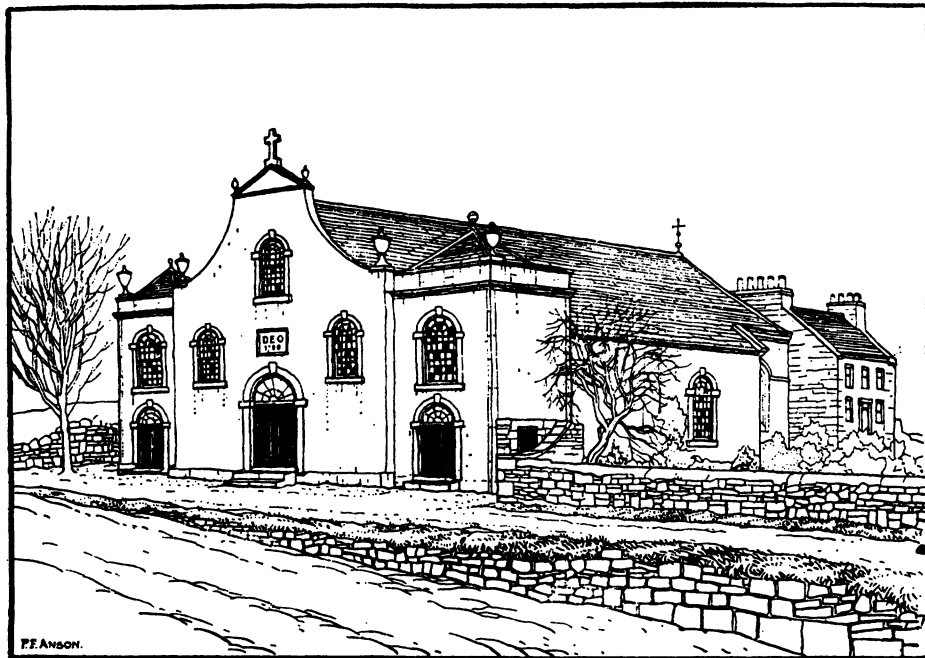
Britain formed a partial exception. In the wake of the Glorious Revolution, Protestant dissenters there enjoyed increasing social acceptance, and the Toleration Act of 1689 offered licenses for their meeting houses, which formerly had remained clandestine. Some of their new places of worship, with imposing façades and central locations, made bold public statements.⁶⁶ For British Catholics, by contrast, change occurred only within parameters set long before: their places of worship grew grander and less secret, too, but they retained the essential quality of a *schuilkerk*, invisibility. The impact of Catholic emancipation at the end of the eighteenth century was correspondingly dramatic, as a Scottish comparison reveals (Figure 9). Constructed in the 1750s, St. Ninian’s Chapel, Tynet, was “a small little house wher a poor woman had lived for some time, to which Tynet proposed making an additioe as a cot for his sheep, but in effect for our use.” St. Gregory’s, Preshome,

⁶⁵ Roger Williams, *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution for the Cause of Conscience Discussed* (1644), quoted in Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Prerevolutionary England* (New York, 1997), 417.

⁶⁶ Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses in Central England* (1986–); Martin S. Briggs, *Puritan Architecture and Its Future* (London, 1946), 11–37; H. Lismer Short, “The Architecture of the Old Meeting Houses,” *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society* 8 (1944): 109–12; Davies, *Worship and Theology*, 2: 60–67. For a description of London’s Dissenting chapels, see Geoffrey S. Holmes, *The Trial of Doctor Sacheverell* (London, 1973), 161–74.



St Ninian's, Tynet (1755).



St Gregory's, Preshome (1788).

FIGURE 9: Clandestine church versus public church: St. Ninian's, Tynet, and St. Gregory's, Preshome, in Scotland. Modern drawings by Peter F. Anson. Courtesy of Dom Donald McGlynn, Sancta Maria Abbey—Nunraw, Haddington, Scotland.

built on the eve of emancipation, had a western façade in the Italian Baroque style that proclaimed its identity as Catholic church. Its pedimented gable, complete with urn finials, was inscribed “DEO 1788.”⁶⁷

Exceptions can be found outside Britain as well, but what is striking overall is the continued vigor of the *schuilkerk* tradition. In the short run, at least, Enlightenment influence produced a broadening of toleration within that tradition more often than its repudiation. Emperor Joseph II’s Patent of Toleration (1781), hailed as a milestone in the rise of tolerance, offers a telling example. The freedom it granted Austrian Protestants was to have “private religious exercise” (*exercitium religionis privatum*). This differed from “public” religious exercise, the edict specified, in the appearance of the building where it was conducted. Protestant churches were to have “no chimes, no bells, towers or any public entrance from the street as might signify a church.”⁶⁸ However revolutionary it was in granting full citizenship to religious dissenters, the edict remained conservative with regard to the spatial accommodation of their worship. It allowed Vienna’s Protestants, the largest group in the land, merely to trade one *schuilkerk* for another—or three, to be precise, for two. Protestant worship had been thriving in the capital for well over half a century under the auspices of the Danish, Swedish, and Dutch embassies.⁶⁹ Upon issuance of the edict, the two Lutheran congregations merged and, together with the Reformed, purchased an abandoned convent belonging formerly to the Poor Clares. The complex had to be modified extensively to meet the terms of the edict. An aerial view shows the results (Figure 10): the convent church, used by the Lutherans, is hidden from street view by a new row of two-story houses; access to it is from a courtyard reached via the entrance to a house to the right of the church. The Reformed “Bethaus” is just further to the right. Only in the 1880s did either *Bethaus* take on the external appearance of a church.⁷⁰

Exercitium religionis privatum: Joseph II’s government borrowed the term from a document that predated the Enlightenment by half a century, the Treaty of Osnabrück (1648), part of the Peace of Westphalia. There it stands as one of three recognized types of religious worship. One is called “domestic devotion” (*devotio domestica*): Lutheran subjects of Catholic princes, and vice-versa, “are to be

⁶⁷ George Hay, *The Architecture of Scottish Post-Reformation Churches, 1560–1843* (Oxford, 1957), 154–55, quotation on 154; Anson, *Underground Catholicism*, 158, 203–04. Even after emancipation, Catholic chapels in Britain were forbidden to have towers or bells. Some continued to be of the *schuilkerk* variety, for instance in Monmouth, Wales; Mullett, *Catholics in Britain and Ireland*, 163.

⁶⁸ Peter F. Barton, ed., “Das Toleranzpatent von 1781: Edition der wichtigsten Fassungen,” in *Im Zeichen der Toleranz: Aufsätze zur Toleranzgesetzgebung des 18. Jahrhunderts in den Reichen Joseph II., ihren Voraussetzungen und ihren Folgen; Eine Festschrift*, Peter F. Barton, ed. (Vienna, 1981), 165, also 168, 170.

⁶⁹ Karl von Otto, “Evangelischer Gottesdienst in Wien vor der Toleranzzeit,” *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für die Geschichte des Protestantismus in Österreich* 7 (1886): 120–31; Gustav Reingrabner, “Eine evangelische Predigt aus der Zeit vor dem Toleranzpatent, gehalten in der dänischen Gesandtschaftskapelle in Wien,” *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für die Geschichte des Protestantismus in Österreich* 95 (1979): 49–52; Christian Stubbe, “Vom dänischen Gesandtschaftsprediger Burchardi in Wien: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des evangelischen Gottesdienstes in Wien vor dem Toleranzpatent,” *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für die Geschichte des Protestantismus in Österreich* 53 (1932): 52–60.

⁷⁰ Permanently, that is; in 1815, a street entrance was added for Archduchess Henriette von Nassau-Weilburg, removed in 1830 upon her death. Note also that by special permission of Joseph II the Lutheran church retained two of its original three towers. Mecenseffy and Rassl, *Die evangelischen Kirchen Wiens*, 54–67.

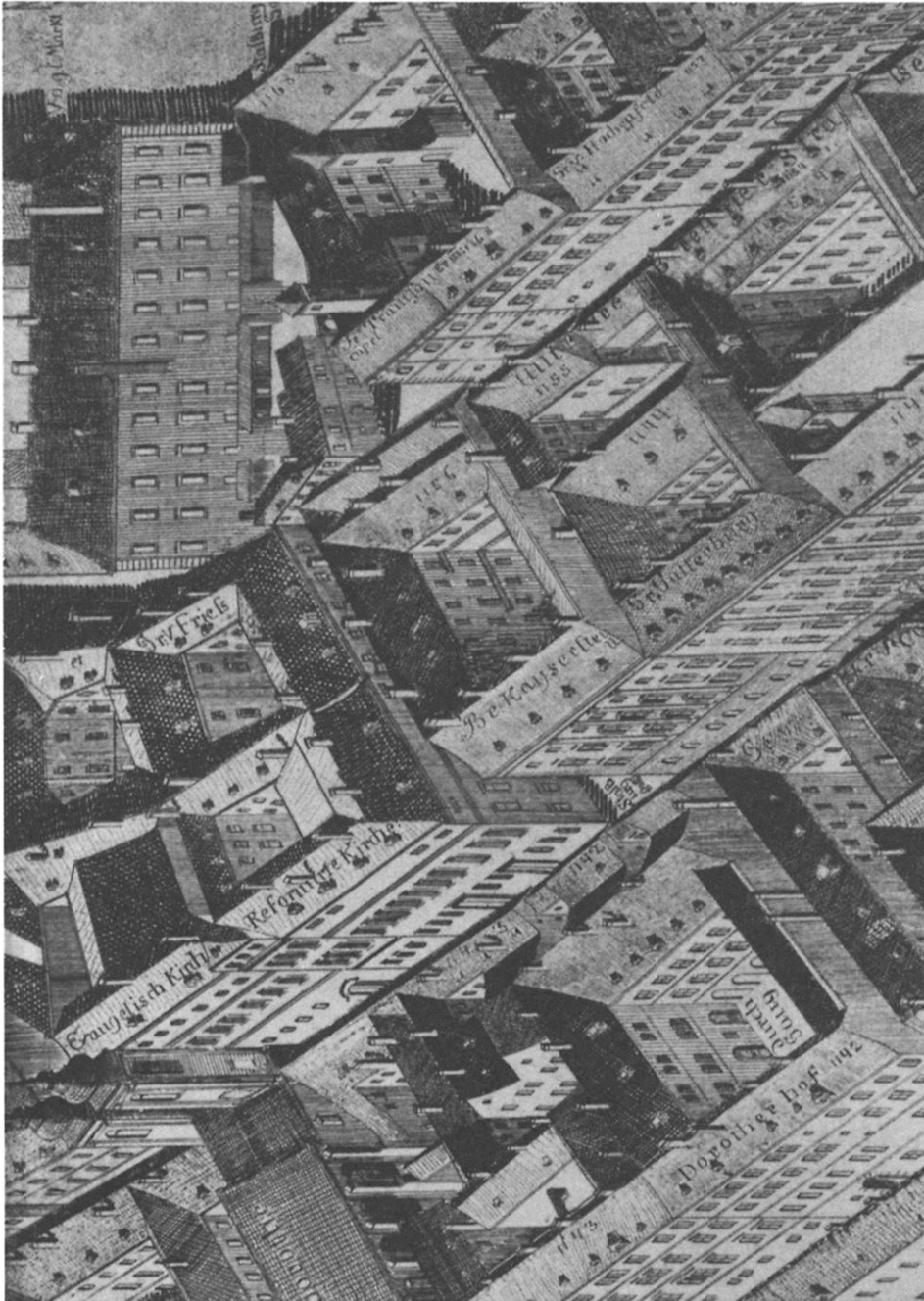


FIGURE 10: Aerial view of the Evangelical Lutheran and Reformed churches on the Dorotheergasse, Vienna, constructed in the 1780s. Detail from engraving by Joseph Daniel Huber, 1785. Courtesy of Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien.

patiently endured and not hindered from applying themselves to their devotions with a free conscience privately at home, without investigation or disturbance.”⁷¹ The treaty also permits the three major confessions to operate proper churches wherever they were doing so in 1624—to have what it calls *exercitium religionis publicum*. But it also recognizes an intermediate category of worship that people could likewise continue (or resume), *exercitium religionis privatum*, which it describes as led by clergy and practiced not “in churches at set hours” but rather “in their [the worshippers’] own houses or in other houses designated for the purpose.”⁷² In other words, *exercitium privatum* was worship in a *schuilkerk*.

With this tripartite distinction, the diplomats in Westphalia acknowledged that much more than family prayers went on in private “houses.” Joseph’s government was even more explicit, describing “churches” that lacked the external signs of a church. How paradoxical: an institution whose sole value lies in its invisibility is acknowledged in epochal documents and written into the very constitution of the empire. The paradox, though, reflects two crucial truths about the *schuilkerk*: first, that its physical, not legal, invisibility was chiefly responsible for its effectiveness; and, second, that the pretense to privacy and domesticity it embodied was a very thin one. Indeed, the distinction in early modern Europe between public and private worship was as much cultural fiction as it was social reality. It was a story that enabled Europeans to accommodate dissent without confronting it directly, to tolerate knowingly what they could not bring themselves to accept fully. It preserved a public semblance of religious unity and thus contained the threat of religious conflict. It allowed people to go on living as if civic and sacral community were still one and the same. This was patently a fiction, and was recognized as such. The Dutch spoke of “looking through the fingers”; the metaphor captures the self-imposed character of the blindness as well as its incompleteness. “Turning a blind eye” to dissent carried a similar sense. Even more common was the term “connivance,” used from Ireland to Prussia.⁷³ This language captures a tolerance that was grudging and partial but self-conscious. For their part, dissenters participated in the fiction by refraining from challenging the monopoly over public religious life enjoyed by the official church of their community. Their assertiveness usually took a different form: expanding the private space within which they worshiped.

The distinction between public and private worship that emerged in early modern Europe was not an isolated phenomenon. It formed part of a broader distinction between public and private spheres that has received much scholarly attention of late. Some of this attention flowed out of an interest in the history of *mentalité*; some of it was inspired by Jürgen Habermas in *The Structural Transform-*

⁷¹ Müller, *Instrumenta pacis Westphalicae*, German text 125, Latin 37.

⁷² The original is “in aedibus propriis aut alienis ei rei destinatis,” Müller, *Instrumenta pacis Westphalicae*, Latin text 18, German 107. The distinction between *devotio domestica qualificata* and *inqualificata* developed later; see J. B. Sägmüller, “Der Begriff des exercitium religionis publicum, exercitium religionis privatum und der devotio domestica im Westfälischen Frieden,” *Theologische Quartalschrift* 90 (1908): 255–79, which goes so far, erroneously, as to equate religious tolerance solely with *exercitium religionis privatum*.

⁷³ Fagan, *Second City*, 112; Heinrich Pigge, *Die religiöse Toleranz Friedrichs des Grossen nach ihrer theoretischen und praktischen Seite* (Mainz, 1899), 318–19.

ation of the Public Sphere, which offered historians a thought-provoking paradigm for the rise of modern political culture.⁷⁴ Within and among these historiographic strands, general agreement exists that the centuries between Reformation and French Revolution saw the sundering of a once-undifferentiated communal sphere into separate public and private spheres.⁷⁵ There is agreement too that religious developments contributed to this fundamental remapping of social space. The *schuilkerk* reveals one specific way in which they did. Europe's new religious divisions threatened to destroy the cohesion of communities; distinguishing public from private worship was a way to save it. By redefining freedom of conscience to mean freedom of devotion for families within their homes, Europeans designated the family home as something it had never previously been, a space safe for practices otherwise forbidden. The *schuilkerk* then simply exploited the potential of the space. The line separating private sphere from public received reinforcement every time the orthodox turned a blind eye to *schuilkerk* services.

Scholars offer different descriptions of the new private sphere. Reinhart Koselleck, on whose ideas Habermas drew, sees the repressive forces of absolutist government restricting severely its size. He equates it with the realm of conscience, the mental world of the individual where people enjoy full autonomy and privacy.⁷⁶ An alternate definition equates the private sphere with the family home, which scholars portray as an effective refuge, at least by the eighteenth century, from the demands of society and a hothouse of emotional intimacy. Yet another definition sees individuals carving out "private" lives outside the home, in the activities and friends they freely embraced. These three definitions jostle against one another inconsistently in the third, early modern volume of Philippe Ariès' *History of Private Life*.⁷⁷ Europe's *schuilkerken* testify to the widespread operation, beginning as early as the sixteenth century, of the second definition. Although other structures served also as disguises, most *schuilkerken* were tolerated by pretending they were family homes. The Edict of Nantes, Peace of Westphalia, and other official documents spoke of them explicitly as located inside houses. Several of the terms used to denote them—house church, prayer house, meeting house, mass house, house chapel—emphasized likewise their domestic character.

Schuilkerken also shed light on the nature of the public sphere. Habermas saw emerging in the eighteenth century a new, "authentic, bourgeois" public sphere, in which individuals engaged in rational discussion and debate, first about literary

⁷⁴ English transl., Cambridge, 1989; original German edition, 1962.

⁷⁵ Some of this vast literature is reviewed in Dena Goodman, "Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime," *History and Theory* 31 (1992): 1–20.

⁷⁶ Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Oxford, 1988), esp. 11, 17–22. On this point, Olivier Christin follows Koselleck, as does a recent study of Leiden by Christine Kooi. Christin, *La paix de religion*, 209; Kooi, *Liberty and Religion: Church and State in Leiden's Reformation, 1572–1620* (Leiden, 2000), 162, 167, 194. While most historians today emphasize the limitations on the power of absolutist rulers, Koselleck conflates the reality of absolutist government with its most radical, Hobbesian theory.

⁷⁷ Eng. transl., Cambridge, Mass., 1989, French edition, 1986. The second definition was classically formulated in Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (New York, 1977); the third is artfully developed in Jonathan Dewald, *Aristocratic Experience and the Origins of Modern Culture: France, 1570–1715* (Berkeley, Calif., 1993).

matters, then politics. Did *schuilkerken* help give birth to such a sphere? On first consideration, the hypothesis seems plausible. James Van Horn Melton has found “structural similarities” between Pietist conventicles and the salons, coffee houses, and other social forums in which Habermas sees the new sphere crystallizing.⁷⁸ *Schuilkerken* bear some resemblance to those conventicles. Other historians, most notably Dale Van Kley, have made a compelling case for the role of religious controversy in stimulating public debate and appeals to “public opinion” of the kind Habermas describes.⁷⁹ Obviously, *schuilkerken* were forums for the expression of religious dissent. Yet there are good reasons not to conflate the *schuilkerk* or religious dissent generally with the phenomenon that concerned Habermas. *Schuilkerk* congregations may indeed be regarded as components of a civil society separate from the state, but, with members of widely different social status and degrees of education, they did not form a unitary, enlightened public. Affiliated with every Christian denomination and both branches of European Jewry, they shared no common set of beliefs or practices. Some engaged in “rational-critical debate”; others gathered principally to enact rituals. Some allowed women and lay men to play leadership roles, but over time clerical authority tended to rise, not fall. Nor were such congregations hosted only in “bourgeois” homes.

Habermas contrasted his modern public sphere to an earlier one characterized by “representative publicness.” In the latter, self-display and self-representation to others were what gave a person or thing its public quality. Such publicness, he argues, was achieved through the use of insignia, clothing, demeanor, rhetoric, festivities, and other symbolic vocabularies. It was in itself an assertion of status and power.⁸⁰ Although brief and merely suggestive, Habermas’s description of “representative publicness” does seem to capture the difference between public and private worship in early modern Europe. Symbolic self-representation to an external audience was precisely what distinguished an ordinary parish, or cathedral, or monastic church from a *schuilkerk*, and the publicness of the former was indeed an assertion of the status and power that distinguished a community’s official faith from that of dissenters. Contrary, though, to Habermas’s claim that this sort of publicness yielded to a new, modern one in the eighteenth century, the continued operation of *schuilkerken* suggests that “representative publicness” survived to the

⁷⁸ James Van Horn Melton, “Pietism, Politics, and the Public Sphere in Germany,” in *Religion and Politics in Enlightened Europe*, James E. Bradley and Dale K. Van Kley, eds. (Notre Dame, Ind., 2001), 294–333.

⁷⁹ Dale K. Van Kley, *The Damiens Affair and the Unraveling of the Ancien Régime, 1750–1770* (Princeton, N.J., 1984); Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560–1791* (New Haven, Conn., 1996), 191–248; David A. Bell, *Lawyers and Citizens: The Making of a Political Elite in Old Regime France* (Oxford, 1994); D. Carrol Joynes, “The Gazette de Leyde: The Opposition Press and French Politics, 1750–1757,” in *Press and Politics in Pre-Revolutionary France*, Jack R. Censer and Jeremy D. Popkin, eds. (Berkeley, Calif., 1987), 133–69; Arlette Farge, *Subversive Words: Public Opinion in Eighteenth-Century France*, Rosemary Morris, trans. (University Park, Pa., 1995), chap. 2; Peter R. Campbell, *Power and Politics in Old Regime France, 1720–1745* (London, 1996). Focusing on France, these scholars locate the origins of a “politics of contestation” not in inter-confessional debate but rather in the Jansenist controversy.

⁸⁰ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Thomas Berger, trans. (Cambridge, 1989), 5–14. The contrast between the two types of public sphere is usefully emphasized by Harold Mah, “Phantasies of the Public Sphere: Rethinking the Habermas of Historians,” *Journal of Modern History* 72 (2000): 153–82.

very end of the old regime and, fragmentarily, even beyond. While the trend was for them to grow in size and lose their concern about secrecy, *schuilkerken* always maintained at least a superficial invisibility. Their privacy, in the final analysis, was a widely acknowledged fiction, and an increasingly thin one at that. Yet as late as the 1780s, that fiction was still being maintained. As a concession to popular opinion—the prejudice of the orthodox—it bears a striking resemblance to the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy that President Bill Clinton introduced for gays and lesbians in the U.S. military. Such pieces of social hypocrisy belie both the rationality and openness that Habermas attributed to the “authentic” public sphere. At the same time, they reveal how “unstable and elusive,” in Melton’s words, the boundaries between public and private really were, and still are.⁸¹

⁸¹ James Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge, 2001), 15; see likewise Goodman, “Public Sphere and Private Life.” Habermas himself presented his modern public sphere ambiguously as both normative ideal and social reality, as Keith Baker and Geoff Eley, among others, have pointed out; see their contributions to *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Craig Calhoun, ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1992).

Benjamin J. Kaplan is Professor of Dutch History at University College London, and he holds an appointment in early modern religious history at the University of Amsterdam. He received his PhD in 1989 from Harvard University, where he studied with Steven Ozment and Simon Schama. Subsequently, he taught at Brandeis University and the University of Iowa. His publications include *Calvinists and Libertines: Confession and Community in Utrecht, 1578–1620* (1995), which explains, through a case study, how the Netherlands became the most religiously tolerant land in seventeenth-century Europe; it received the Philip Schaff Prize and the Roland Bainton Prize in History and Theology. Kaplan’s current book project, titled *Divided by Faith* (forthcoming, Harvard University Press), is a social history of religious toleration in early modern Europe.