

Rethinking the Twentieth-Century Catholic Church in Belgium: the Inter-Relationship Between Liturgy and Architecture

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INTRODUCTION

When considering the evolution of twentieth-century church-building, two topics are inescapable — the Liturgical Movement and developments in Modern architecture — and this article therefore argues that in order to appreciate the evolution of the twentieth-century Catholic parish church it is essential to take both liturgical and architectural developments into account. It focuses on such churches in Belgium because that country played a particularly important role in developing relevant theory, Belgian clergy having been founding members of the Liturgical Movement. However, the movement took more than half a century to develop fully there, during which time other initiatives also appeared, such as *Domus Dei* (the Belgian Diocesan organization for church-building, set up in 1952) and *Pro Arte Christiana*. Moreover, other factors — ecclesiastical, social, economic, political and cultural — also prove to be crucial in reaching a full appreciation of twentieth-century church-building, for instance, the impact of diocesan guidelines for church-building, and of bodies such as Catholic Action (*Katholieke Actie*) and Parish Action (*Parochiale Actie*). This article demonstrates that, despite few apparent formal similarities (if any) between churches built in Belgium before and after World War II, the developments of the inter-war period were fundamental to post-war developments in Belgian church-building.

If one compares two (carefully selected) twentieth-century Catholic churches in the archdiocese of Mechlin-Brussels — one that dates from the inter-war period (the Art Deco

church of St Peter and St Paul in Neder-Overhembeek by the architect Julien De Ridder, 1933–35; Fig. 1) and one that was constructed during the Second Vatican Council (the 'house church' of St Aldegonde in Ezeemaal by the architect Marc Dessauvage, 1962–65; Fig. 2) — the difference between them is unmistakable. Such a contrast is evident at many levels: style, brief, architectural layout, constructional techniques, liturgical layout and specific case history (in particular the decision-making process and the involvement of the clergy and parishioners in it). On the one hand, in the case of the church of St Peter and St Paul's church, the initiative for the new church originated from within the local lay community, while the archdiocese kept its distance. The local architect incorporated a monumental tower and vestibule into his design, as well as rooms for secular activities, thus taking into account the needs and wishes of the parishioners, who collected the funds necessary to build 'their' church. The church was erected in a contemporary Art Deco style, which was quite typical of Belgian church design during the inter-war period. On the other hand, the post-war church in Ezeemaal was designed by Marc Dessauvage (1931–84), who can be considered as the best-known and most prolific 'church-builder' in Flanders of that time; he was supported by prominent writers and clergy, such as Geert Bekaeft, Dom Frédéric Debuyt and leading figures within the archdiocese, and consequently was able to realize twenty churches and other religious buildings in Belgium between 1959 and 1974. The church in Ezeemaal is, like the rest of his *oeuvre*, characterized by an austere, contemporary architectural style, stripped of the accretions of Catholic tradition. The difference between these two churches is illustrative of the evolution, both in theory and practice, of Catholic church-building in the archdiocese, and indeed across all Catholic Belgium throughout the twentieth century. Yet, despite obvious differences, both these churches can be traced back to a single, continuous undercurrent, namely the Liturgical Movement and its advocacy of the laity's active participation. In addition to the Liturgical Movement, both in its strictly liturgical sense and with regard to its socio-cultural implications, the search for a Modern, or rather contemporary, architecture can be considered as a second important strategy or concept advanced by the Church continuously throughout the twentieth century. Scholarly research into the twentieth-century Catholic Church in Belgium has already drawn attention to the inter-relationship between the development of architectural form and the Liturgical Movement. Geert Bekaeft, the critical and authoritative voice with regard to church architecture in Belgium, argued that the main stimuli in the history of modern church-building can be traced back to the Liturgical Movement.¹ Likewise, Dom Frédéric Debuyt, a Benedictine specialist in liturgy and architecture, stated that 'Modern religious architecture was born around 1930 out of the union of two different phenomena: on the one hand modern architecture [...], on the other hand, the liturgical movement, with its theological, pastoral and cultural implications'.² The repeated reference to the Liturgical Movement, whether or not in relation to architectural developments, seems to offer a sound explanation for the development of the twentieth-century Church, especially in a Belgian context, as the Liturgical Movement worldwide owes its existence above all to the Belgian liturgist Dom Lambert Beauduin. In-depth research into inter-war and post-war church buildings in the archdiocese of Mechlin-Brussels results in the hypothesis that the Liturgical Movement is indeed unavoidable when defining strategies and explaining changes in twentieth-century church architecture in Belgium.³ This continuous undercurrent, however, needs to be

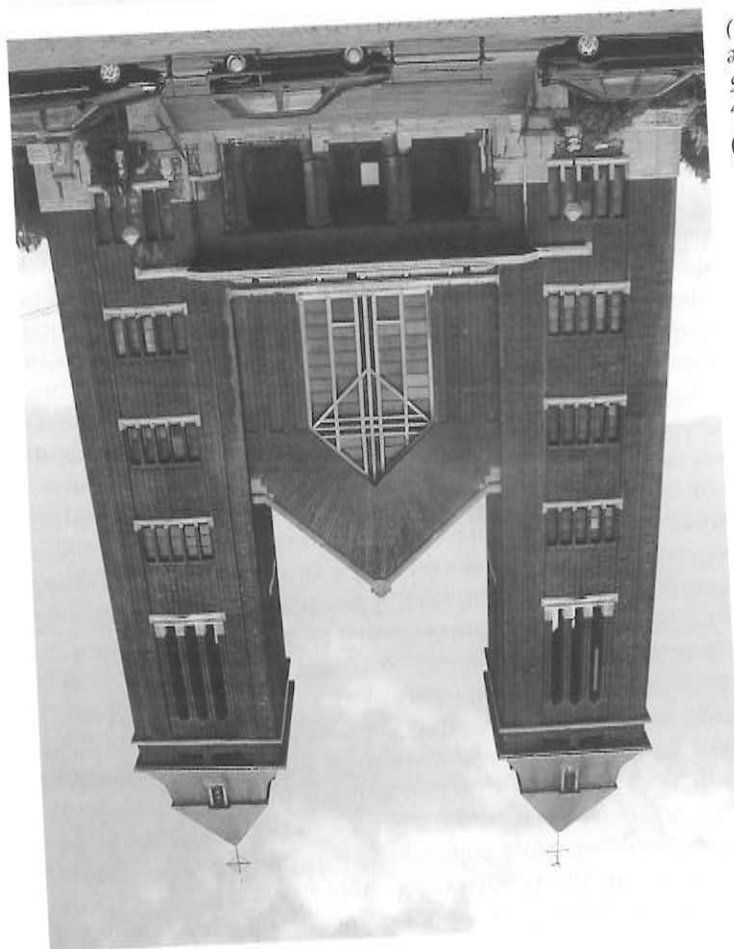


Fig. 1. St Peter and St Paul,
Neder-Oeverhembeek, Julien
De Ridder, 1934 (Photo:
Anne-Françoise Morel, 2005)

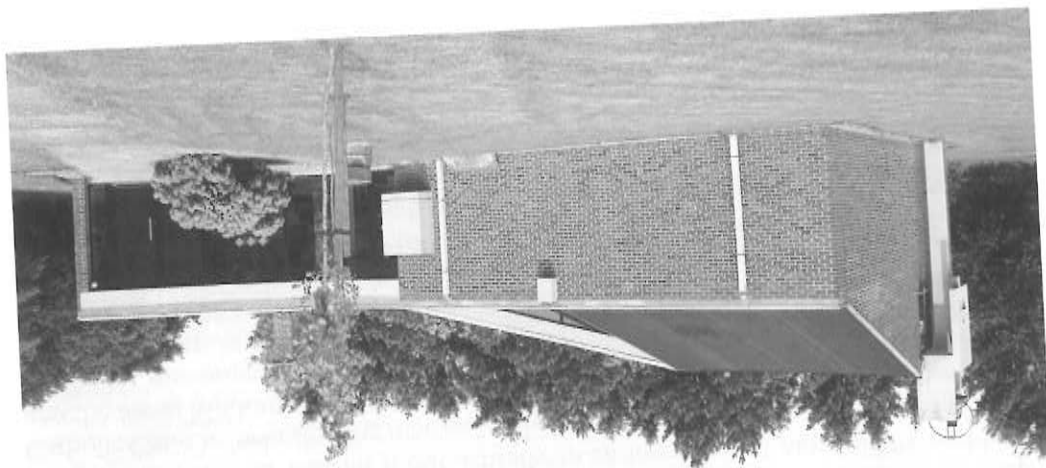


Fig. 2. (below)
St Aldegond, Ezenmaal,
Marc Dessauvage, 1962-65
(Photo: Stephanie Van de
Voorde, 2005)

examined more closely, in particular with regard to the varying and fluctuating way in which it was implemented. For example, in the church of St Peter and St Paul, the Liturgical Movement clearly operated from the grass roots up, with a local community driving the erection of a new church, whereas in the post-war period the Liturgical Movement was implemented and supported by the Church authorities, unreservedly endorsing Dessauvage's innovative idiom. It seems that, after years of developing 'adherence' from below and only tacit acceptance by the Church authorities, the Liturgical Movement only came to be fully implemented by Belgian clergymen after recognition and approval by ecclesiastical authorities at the highest level.

A thorough analysis of church-building in the Brussels region between 1920 and 1970, rooted within a national and international context of both the history of architecture and liturgy, must therefore look beyond any interpretation limited to the Liturgical Movement alone. While still relating Modern church architecture in Belgium to the fluctuating implementation of that movement, it is also necessary to examine contemporary and contextual strategies and conditions in order to grasp its evolution. Ecclesiastical, social, economic and cultural factors need to be taken into account, for instance institutionally established directives (such as diocesan guidelines for church-building, or the decree on sacred art issued by the Second Vatican Council). In addition, Catholic Action — an international movement initiated by Pius X's *Il Fermo Proposito* (1905) and based on socio-cultural ideas rather than liturgical or architectural principles — proves to be a key element in the development of the inter-war parish church as a religious, liturgical and community centre. Pius X's text aimed at a stronger collaboration between clergy and laity. In Belgium, however, Catholic Action soon became Parish Action, as parishioners took on a leading role in parish organization, including the building of inter-war parish churches. Societies for the advancement of religious art and architecture (for example, the Domus Dei foundation and Pro Arte Christiana) likewise played an undeniable role in the reconception of the post-war parish church in twentieth-century Belgium.

This article will demonstrate that, despite few if any apparent formal similarities between inter-war and post-war church architecture, inter-war ideas and movements were fundamental to the post-war developments. Consequently, it will become clear that the radical changes in Catholic church-building in the mid- to late twentieth century were not primarily due to Vatican II but actually to earlier renewal movements within the Catholic Church, including the renewal of the liturgy, lay involvement and participation, and the use of Modern architecture. Vatican II served rather to confirm and support these particular movements, which until then had simply been certain movements among others, and thus to support the architecture emanating from them. The article will first look briefly at the inter-war legacy inherited by Marc Dessauvage, before describing the practice of church-building in Belgium during the inter-war period, through a case study of the church of St Peter and St Paul in Neder-Overheembeek; this will be followed by an examination of the post-war situation, as exemplified by St Aldegond in Ezeemaal.

MARC DESSAUVAGE AND THE INTER-WAR LEGACY

Between 1959 and 1974, the architect Marc Dessauvage realized fourteen new churches, three renovations and three religious centres. He was able to create such an extensive and

innovative body of work, partly due to demographic and parochial needs, but not least because he enjoyed the support of distinguished clergymen within the archdiocese. It was the first time since the nineteenth century that the archdiocese took on an active and decisive role in the building of new churches, stimulating a modern architecture that would accord with the ideas of the Second Vatican Council. Dessauvage was given the opportunity to develop a peerless body of work, thanks in particular to the pioneering spirit of Monsignor Theeuwes, responsible for church-building in the archdiocese, and to Jos Fannes, senior secretary and financial director of the archdiocese but also, and significantly, national secretary of Domus Dei. By exercising their influence and repeatedly appointing Dessauvage as architect, Theeuwes and Fannes resolutely set the archdiocese in a new direction. The eminent Belgian architect critic Geert Bekaret, who acted as Dessauvage's mentor at the time, acknowledged this open-mindedness: 'Monsignor Theeuwes took risks. That alone is worth mentioning in our conservative country. The risks he took a few years ago by commissioning some important and sensitive projects from Dessauvage, were nevertheless amply rewarded'.⁴ Besides the archdiocese, the Benedictine abbey of St-Andries in Bruges, in particular in the person of Dom Frédéric Debuyt, also openly supported Dessauvage, Debuyt providing one of Dessauvage's first commissions, the refurbishment of the guest chapel at the abbey of St-Andries (1960). From then onwards Debuyt followed Dessauvage closely and dedicated numerous articles to commending his work, endorsing his architectural concepts in international periodicals such as *L'Art d'Eglise* (published by the abbey of St-Andries), thereby advancing the (inter)national reputation of Dessauvage as a church-builder. Nevertheless, the positive attitude of the archdiocese and the Benedictine abbey remained exceptional within the Belgian context, as Dessauvage himself acknowledged in an interview: 'I know very well where my ideas find support and where not; and I act accordingly'.⁵ Indeed, Dessauvage had to deal with resistance and criticism, because he proposed a radically new approach to the liturgical, devotional and representational requirements of (post-conciliar) church-building. Unlike some of his contemporaries — church architects like Roger Bastin, Jean Van den Bogerode, Jos Van Driessche and Julian Lampens — Dessauvage completely renounced the tendency to monumentalise, the use of mass for effect, and the 'grand gesture'. The Modern and contemporary architectural vocabulary of his church buildings, constructed with modest materials (like bare concrete or brick), corresponds with the sober layout of his plans, offering the liturgy full scope for its own development. He reduced the church building to its essentials — a gathering place for the Christian community — and progressively developed the concept of the 'house church' (*huiskerk* or *maison-église*): a dignified but modest church in which the community could gather, 'feel at home' and commune with God.⁶

Dessauvage's innovative designs, focusing on the community in the context of an organic, austere architecture, would soon become a model for church-building much copied after Vatican II (1962) but actually preceding it. If his churches can be considered as new in style or revolutionary in form, the underlying principles are not. These can actually be traced back to the first half of the twentieth century, when local initiatives regarding church-building arose in the archdiocese under the impetus of the Liturgical Movement and Parochial Action. One of the fundamental tenets of the former was the active participation of parishioners in public worship. As regards the architectural

expression of this concept, the altar was emphasized and — once more — positioned in the midst of the community, whereas secondary altars and side aisles received, in accordance with their minor importance as places for veneration and personal devotion, far less architectural emphasis. Likewise, Parish Action also reconsidered the position of the laity, by promoting the involvement of laity in the parish's organization and its (lay) activities. The architectural expression of this could vary greatly: whereas the Liturgical Movement adhered to architectural authenticity, simplicity and sobriety, the community participation of Parish Action sometimes resulted in a very different architectural outcome. Most salient in this case are the majestic towers and forecourts, often erected at the explicit request of the community concerned, even in the face of a difficult economic context, as the community still attached great importance to these visible landmarks.

These obvious architectural manifestations and the rich decorations in some inter-war Art Deco churches might be one of the reasons why critics, such as the French Dominican art historian Pie Raymond Régamey, were extremely concerned about church architecture in Belgium and France after the Second World War:

In Belgium and France, we have to rebuild hundreds of churches but are unable to assure that we are ready to do so in any way better than after 1918. [...] First of all we need to take account of the main religious and human factors that dictate architectural briefs for any church building, as such briefs are currently in a state of development and the subject of controversy. [...] The commendable Liturgical Movement that has been developing in Belgium over the last forty years [...] compels us to rethink church planning. [...] Unfortunately we lack, in both France and Belgium, any entirely satisfactory work to show, which would enable us to make those clergy responsible for building churches perceive the value of architecture that is in keeping with financial exigencies, structural logic and a taste responsive to the qualities of clarity and purity. [...] Religious architecture in Belgium and France is fifteen years behind that in German-speaking Switzerland, Austria and Germany.⁷

Although Régamey's fears were not entirely groundless, they were not to be fulfilled in the years that followed; in Belgium, church-building would experience great changes during the 1950s, making a radical break with the inter-war church, at least in appearance. Admittedly, there are few obvious similarities between the inter-war and the post-war church in Belgium but, as this article will demonstrate, when looking beneath the surface there are indeed similarities, recurrent principles and a constant undercurrent. By examining the strategies, organizations and ideas behind the architectural expression of church buildings in the archdiocese, it is clear that the impetus for the apparently 'radical' renewal in church design post-war was provided during the inter-war period, as all the elements required for the development of the post-war 'house church' were already present then.

EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY AND INTER-WAR ORGANIZATIONS AND INITIATIVES

1) The Liturgical Movement

The Liturgical Movement can be traced back to the National Conference of Catholic Works (Nationale Congres van de Katholieke Werken), held in Mechlin in 1909.⁸ At this conference Dom Lambert Beauduin (1873–1960), of the Benedictine monastery in

Louvain, advocated the active participation of parishioners in public worship and liturgy, thereby endorsing Pius X's *motu proprio* (a decree issued by a pope in his personal capacity) on the use of music within the liturgy, *Tra le sollecitudini* (1903). The active involvement of the laity in worship, considered to be at once the primary and the ultimate source for authentic spirituality, was to be achieved by returning to the vigorous yet modest architecture of early Christianity and by positioning the altar in the middle of the worshipping community. As Geert Bekaeert has already noted, despite this impetus given by Beauduin, the evidence on the ground forces one to admit that in Belgium the Liturgical Movement bore no fruit during the first decades of the twentieth century;⁹ this is in stark contrast with other countries such as Germany and France, where the Liturgical Movement's principles had met with a considerable and positive response. The Belgian branch of the movement had proved to be unsuccessful during these early years, in part because the insights — however sharp they might have been — remained confined within a purely liturgical context. Furthermore, the Belgian ecclesiastical authorities adopted a fairly reticent attitude towards innovation in church design. In consequence, the novel concept of lay participation was only endorsed in local initiatives, gradually set up in individual abbeys, parishes and artistic communities. The Benedictine order was particularly active in this respect, bringing together a contemporary Catholic art movement with liturgical renewal, and seeking to counter the Gothic Revival that had dominated church design since the end of the nineteenth century. Art societies and workshops were founded in the abbeys of Mareadous (Les Ateliers d'Art de Mareadous, 1903), Louvain (La Croix Latine, 1910) and Bruges (L'Artisan Liturgique, 1927). Simplicity, dignity and clarity were the principles that these societies observed, in accordance with that character of authenticity promoted by the Liturgical Movement.¹⁰

iii) *Official guidelines*

In Belgium, the two most important inter-war documents concerning church architecture were the official *Codex Iuris Canonici* issued by the Vatican (1917) and the statutes of the fifth Provincial Council of Mechlin (1938). The Codex stated that the approval of the clerical authorities was required for any church to be (re-)built, restored or decorated, and that no places for a solely profane use could be planned either beneath or above the place of worship itself (in order to preserve the sacred character of the church building).¹¹ The Mechlin statutes in part followed the Liturgical Movement, emphasizing the need for clear visibility of the altar and audibility of the liturgy there. In addition, the *Codex* specified that religious art should be decent and sober, distancing itself from realism and other contemporary art movements. Finally, for the design of new churches preference should be given to architects from within the Catholic community.¹² Overall, these rather general official guidelines dealt mainly with liturgical issues, leaving aside architectural, stylistic and technical matters. Likewise, the Belgian ecclesiastical authorities did not take a stand on contemporary religious art and architecture. Following a middle way between modernity and tradition, the Church neither imposed nor forbade the use of historical styles; based upon a controlled *laissez-faire* policy, renewal was seen desirable (or was at least tolerated), so long as it accorded with Christian tradition. Although no ideal model was put forward and only minimal guidelines were offered for the inter-war church in Brussels, the actual building practice shows genuine attempts to renew

architectural and liturgical practice, and also contemporary Catholic identity, while avoiding revolutionary, radical changes.¹³

iii) A new architecture for a new liturgy

Although the guidelines issued by the ecclesiastical authorities also influenced church-building, their deficiencies were such that their impact is hardly discerned today. By contrast, the architectural implications of the Liturgical Movement shine through in most Belgian inter-war churches. When looking at the architectural organization of the church building, its spatial experience and atmosphere, inter-war churches in Brussels are characterized by a large open nave providing an unobstructed view of the altar, and a short choir and transepts, thus stimulating active involvement in worship. The side aisles, much reduced in width, mainly functioned as passageways (Fig. 3). This revised layout not only stems from the Liturgical Movement but is also closely connected with the evolution of Modern architecture and the possibilities offered by modern construction techniques and materials, such as reinforced concrete. Although considered as an artificial and 'ignoble' material,¹⁴ reinforced concrete was introduced into church architecture around the turn of the century and gradually found acceptance, to become almost 'unavoidable' during the inter-war period; simultaneously, the use of the material moved away from historicist styles and decorative elements in artificial stone towards a contemporary idiom and vocabulary — contemporary in terms of both structure and economics.¹⁵ In the majority of the inter-war churches in Brussels, concrete was primarily used as a convenient means for enabling the spanning of large areas. However, in the churches of St John the Baptist at Moленbeek (Joseph Diongre, 1930–33), St Augustine at Forest (Léon Guanoite and André Watteyne, 1933–36), and St Suzanne at Schaerbeek (Jean Combaz, 1925–28) — habitually referred to as 'the three concrete churches in Brussels' — concrete was not considered merely as a technical means. For example, in the church of St John the Baptist, the rhythmic sequence of parabolic arches in reinforced concrete not only reduced the number of supports required but also served to emphasize the architectural focus on the altar, hence fulfilling a liturgical function. Alongside these new liturgical and architectural developments, the layout of the church remained characterized by more traditional features — such as the plan, with its reference to the Latin cross, and the great scale of the building overall — as these accorded with liturgical renewal.

Although the layout of new-build churches in Brussels often derived from the same underlying (liturgical) principles, a surprisingly high diversity of style is evident among them. The twenty-nine churches newly erected in the inter-war period represent an entire gamut of styles, from historicist ('neo') styles to the then contemporary Art Deco (Figs 4–5). The vast majority, however, were in fact constructed in an architectural style combining modernity and tradition, related to mediaeval art yet nevertheless very modern', to quote the French liturgist Dom Roulin¹⁶ (Fig. 6). This stylistic diversity leads one to surmise that the inter-war church in Brussels cannot be understood in terms of the liturgical renewal alone. Moreover, archival evidence confirms that the ecclesiastical authorities did not exercise any central coordination. Furthermore, the journal issued by the archdiocese's commission on religious buildings scarcely commented upon new-build projects. Therefore, in order to understand both the stylistic variety and the

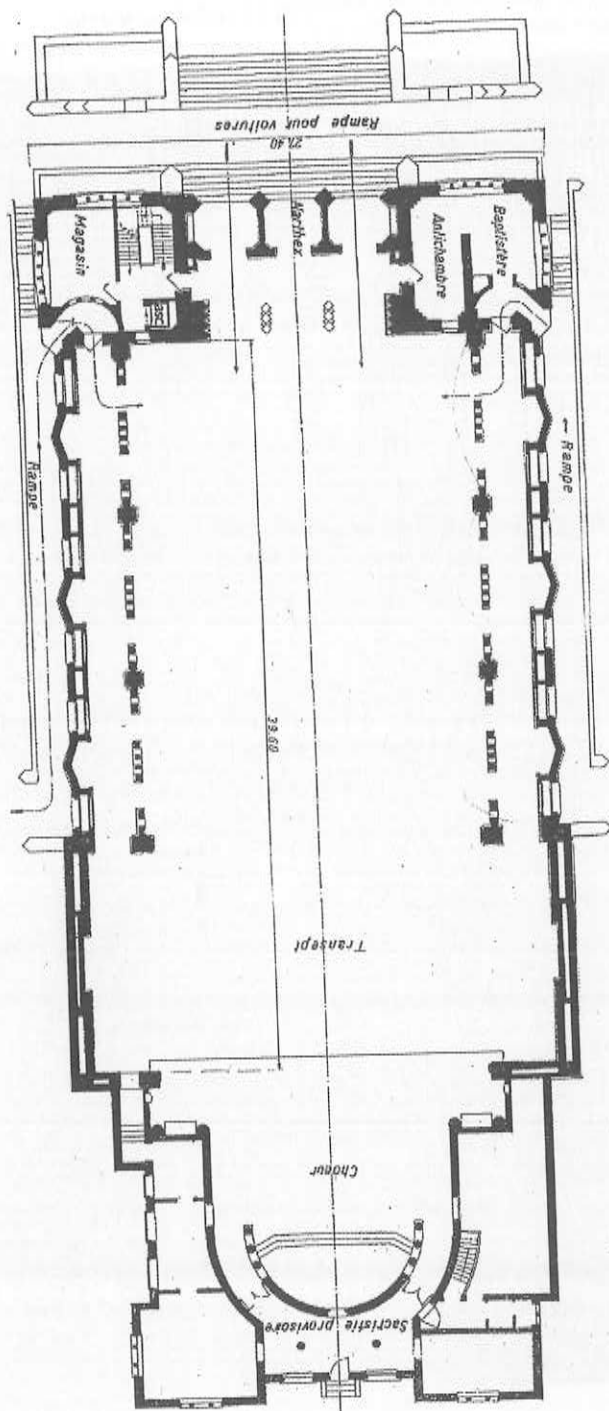


Fig. 3. Plan, St Peter and St Paul, Neder-Overheembeek, Julien De Ridder, 1934 (C. Imbert, *L'Eglise St. Pierre et Nicolas à Neder-Overheembeek*, La Technique des Travaux, 12 (1936), p. 579)

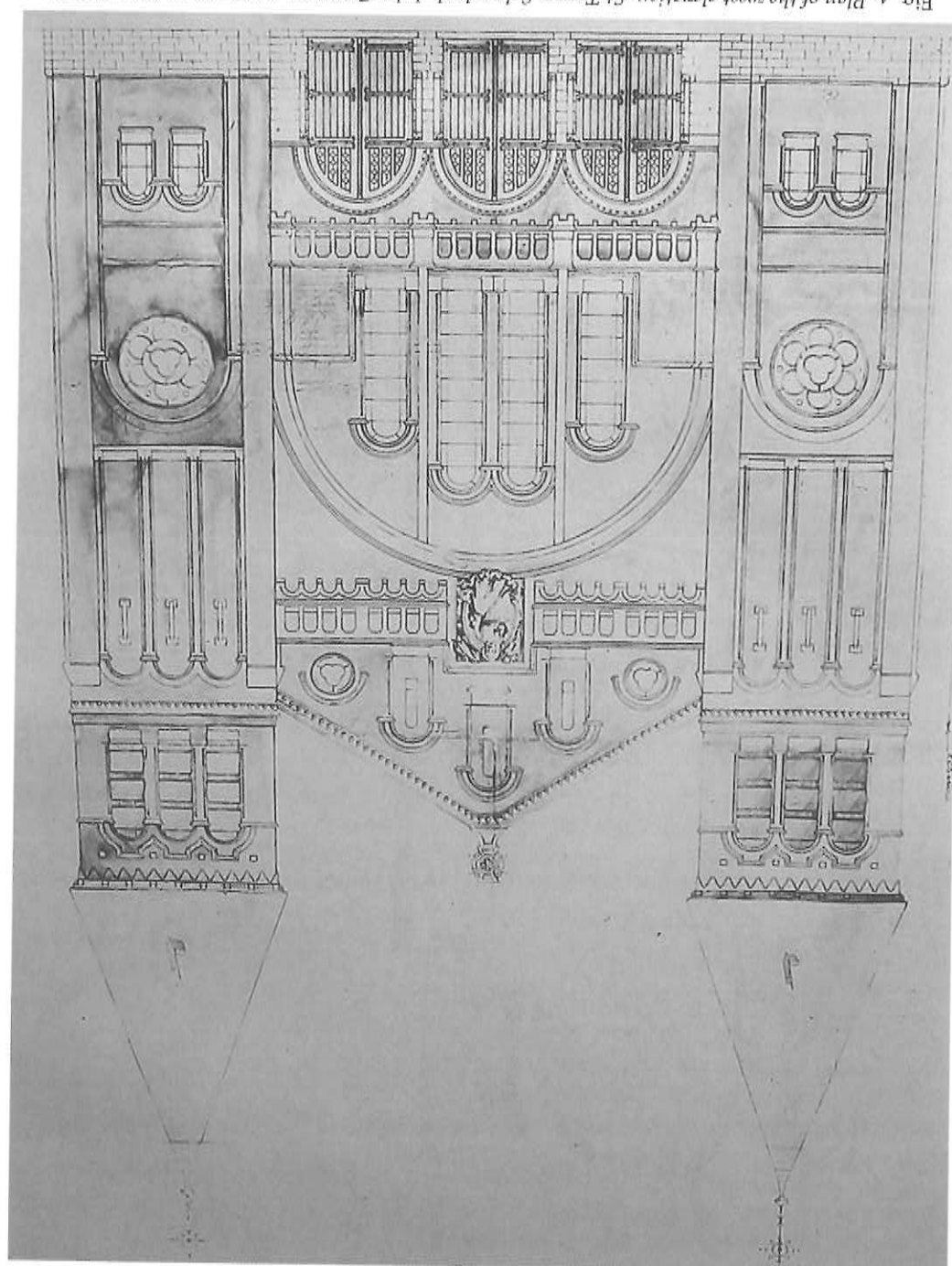


Fig. 4. Plan of the west elevation, St Teresa, Schaarbeek, Jules Coomans, 1926-31: an example of a church designed in a historicist style (Schaarbeek, St Teresa, Parish Archives)

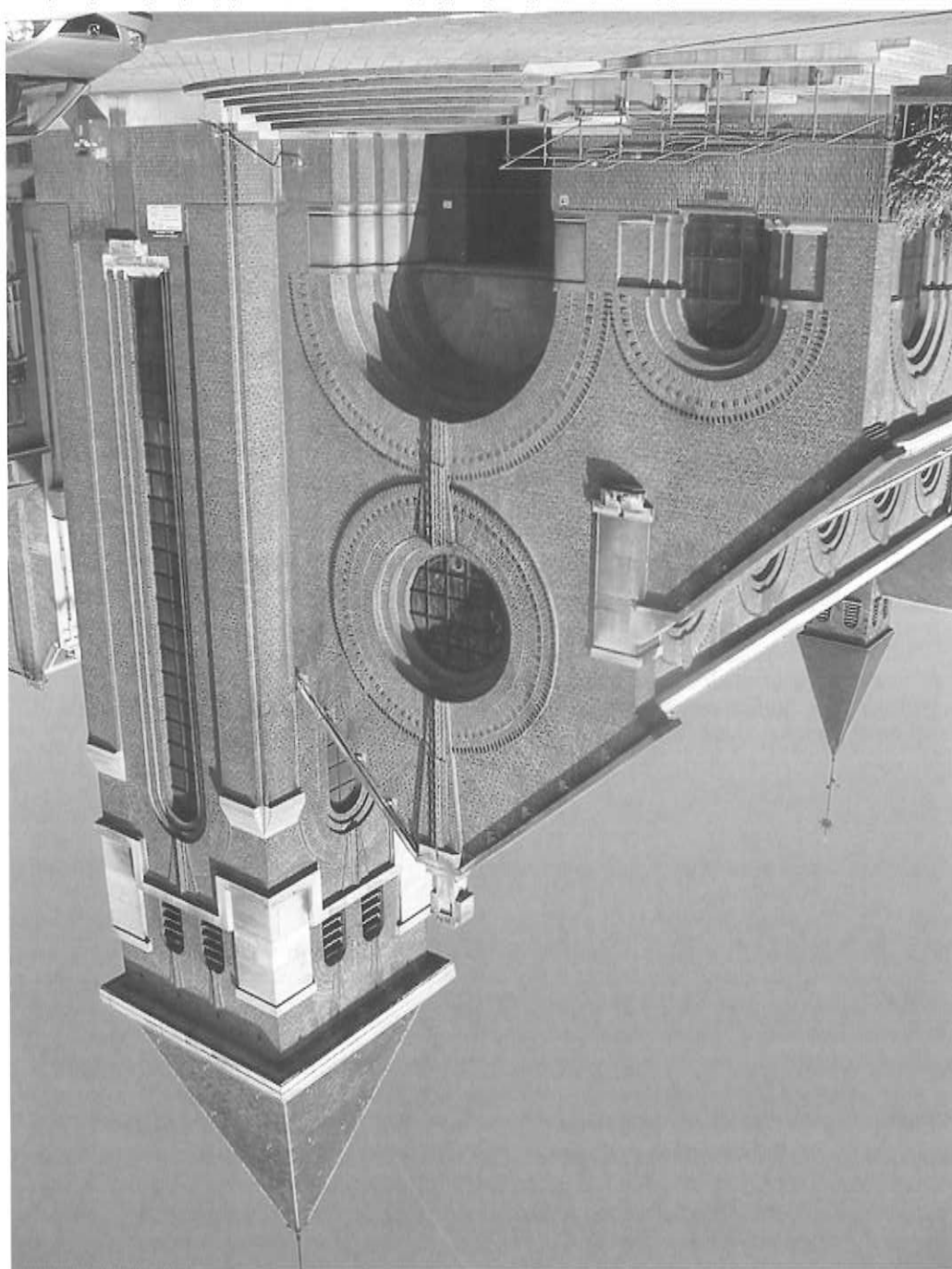


Fig. 5. The Annunciation of Our Lady, Ixelles, Camille Daman, 1934: one of the Arl Deco churches in Brussels (Photo: Anne Françoise Morel, 2005)



Fig. 6. St Alix, Sint Pieters Woluwe, Leonard Homiez, 1936. Medieval features — such as the low, compact exterior volume, round windows and arches, and so on — are translated into a modern architecture: a modern Romanesque style, according to Roulin (Photo: Anne-Françoise Morel, 2005)

decisions made about architectural design, other characteristics of Belgian Catholicism at that time need to be taken into account. One of these is the significant input of the local community; in fact the active participation of the community not only took place within the church but across the whole parochial organization. As a consequence of Catholic Action and Parish Action, the church building became a visual sign of the parish's initiatives and a centre of its activities.

(v) Catholic Action

As an official movement within the Catholic Church that had begun under Pius X,¹⁷ and then blossomed during the inter-war period, Catholic Action strove for involvement of the laity — albeit under clerical control — within the Church, in order to counteract society's secularization and to bring the Church up to date. Covering all activities with a religious bias organized by lay people, it propagated a Catholic social vision.¹⁸ By intensifying organized Catholic religious life, Catholic Action introduced the modern social concepts of mass movement, participation and equality into the Church. One of the fundamental objectives formulated by Catholic Action was the local and direct involvement of lay people in the organization of the parish in order to improve and revitalize parish activities. This objective was translated into Parish Action, the most important vehicle for Catholic Action in Brussels, taking on responsibility for all the religious, social and economical aspects of the local community. Introduced into Belgium

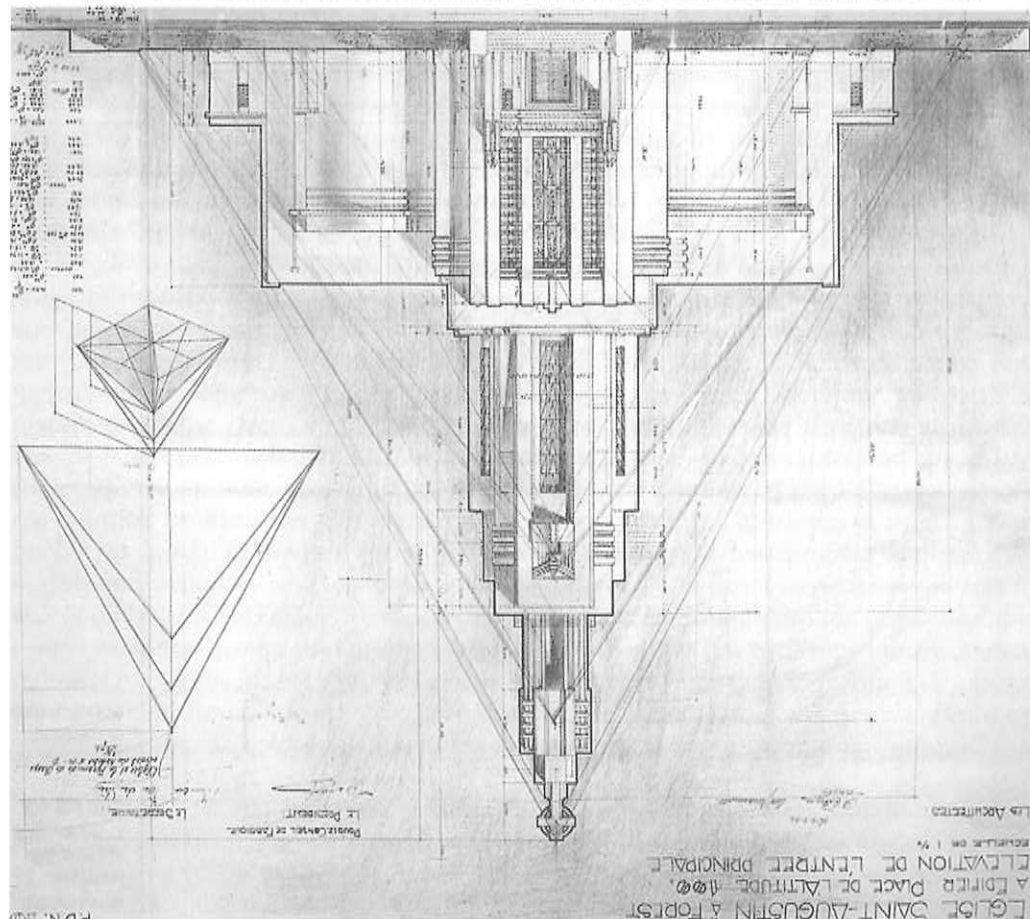


Fig. 7. Elevation, St Augustine, Forest, Léon Guilmotte and André Watteyne, 1933-44. The parishioners' desire for a church tower was combined with the building contractor's demand for extreme visibility: the church with tower was built on a roundabout on one of the highest points in Brussels, thus becoming a landmark both for worship and for the new neighbourhood (Brussels, Archives d'Architecture Moderne; Fonds Guilmotte)

by 1924, Catholic and Parish Action have been key elements in the organization of Belgian Catholicism during the inter-war period. The general idea of controlled lay involvement in the Church also applied to the creation of new parishes and new churches in Brussels, with a grass roots-up decision-making process. By contrast with Paris, where Cardinal Jean Verdier took the initiative for creating ninety-five new churches in new districts (the 'Chantiers du Cardinal'), in Brussels the worshippers had to petition the church authority for new parishes and had to take the initiative for building the new churches in them. In most cases the parish vestry controlled the entire process, from the initial concept to actual construction. Often the architect was appointed because he was known to, or even himself a member of, the

parish vestry,¹⁹ specific qualities regarding church architecture do not seem to have been of primordial importance. Consequently, the choice of an architect was sometimes politically based; all Art Deco churches in the Brussels archdiocese were erected in well-off, politically liberal districts, while churches in historicist styles were built in more rural areas, under Catholic municipalities.²⁰

Not only the architectural style but also the programme of the church-building was affected by the involvement of the local community. Most striking are the communities' requests for rooms for secular activities within the church building, despite the Vatican Code's explicit prohibition of this feature.²¹ The fact that the authorities never vetoed any of these projects corroborates the thesis that they complied with the basic principle of Catholic Action — controlled involvement of laity — in order to increase the role of the parish church in modern social life. Another example of parishioners' influence on the building programme is in the erection of towers and the provision of forecourts in front. Almost all inter-war churches in Brussels were completed with a tower, whose design was often original, thereby making their mark on the cityscape; the tower manifests the presence of the Church amidst the community and was thus a primary instrument in gathering the community together for public worship. Similarly, a forecourt was not just considered as a gathering place for the community before and after the service but also played an important task in several ceremonies — such as the building's consecration, marriages or funerals — and therefore received a lot of attention. When confronted by economical restrictions and a possible omission of the tower or forecourt, parishioners reacted fiercely and came up with creative solutions, as was the case for the tower for St Augustine's church in Forest (Fig. 7).²²

Although Catholic Action had no directly architectural implications, it proves to be crucial in understanding architectural developments in the inter-war period; its involvement of the laity paved the way for stylistic variety and experiment, and influenced the architectural organization and composition of church buildings. In the archdiocese church-building thus represented the practice of the local community, and hence the strong inter-relationship between the community and the church building as a materialized representation of the Church.

A CASE IN POINT: THE CHURCH OF ST PETER AND ST PAUL, NEDER-OVERHEEMBEEK (1933–35)
The church of St Peter and St Paul in Neder-Overheembeek is particularly representative of the Brussels situation, showing all the above-mentioned factors at work. Due to population growth, the two existing churches of Neder-Overheembeek had insufficient capacity to accommodate all believers, and so from 1911 onwards the parish committee envisaged building a single new large church. This would not only solve the problem of accommodation, but would also embellish the cityscape. However, the city council and the archbishop were only prepared to offer financial assistance for an enlargement of either of the existing churches, not for a new building.²³ Nevertheless, the parish committee persisted in their demand for a new building. In 1921, the annexation of Neder-Overheembeek by Brussels provided the definitive impetus; a fear that the city's secularization would infect the surrounding towns prompted the parishioners to start their own Parish Action group. Highly ambitious, the parishioners not only envisaged

a new church, for which they acquired a large plot and appointed an architect, but also a new Catholic school, a parish hall, a cinema and so forth, all under the auspices of Catholic Action.²⁴ The vestry invited the architect Julien De Ridder, who may have been related to a member of the vestry, to design the church, most likely on the grounds of their personal acquaintance with him.

The church, designed along the lines of the liturgical renewal, was conceived as a spacious basilica, with narrow passageways along the sides of the nave and short transepts and choir. The use of concrete enabled wide spans and thus a clear view from the nave to the chancel. The exterior was designed in the Art Deco style, the front façade, preceded by a spacious forecourt leading to a portico with Art Deco sculptures, being flanked by two huge towers, containing rooms for secular, albeit parish, activities (Figs 1 and 8). The church authorities did not make any comments on the building's design.²⁵ The new church of Neder-Overheembeek soon occupied a key position in the social organization of the community, illustrating the efficacy and potential of Catholic Action. Yet, once the building was paid for and completed in 1935, the parish finances proved inadequate to support the associated Catholic works (the school, the cinema and so forth). A pamphlet, proclaiming '10 years of Catholic Works in danger' ('10 jaar katholieke werking in gevaar!'), begged the parishioners for financial contributions. To



Fig. 8. Interior looking to the west, St Peter and St Paul, Neder-Overheembeek, Julien De Ridder, 1934 (Photo: Anne-Françoise Morel, 2005)

underpin the fund-raising campaign and to illustrate the good use made of such finance, no less than a third of the pamphlet dealt with the newly built church.²⁶

This case shows clearly that the controlled participation of the laity in the liturgy (Liturgical Movement) and in parish organization (Catholic Action) had architectural consequences. Church architecture combined traditional and universally recognizable values (such as a basilican plan) with a contemporary influence specific to the locality (Art Deco). The parish church not only represented the Church as the institution of Catholic faith, but also as the nucleus of the local Christian community. When building their church, by and for the people, the architectural choices made by parish communities were in accordance with the ideological middle way: between tradition and renewal.

ON THE EVE OF THE COUNCIL

The problem of church-building had never before posed itself as vigorously and pertinently as it did during the 1950s; the advancement of the active participation of the laity in the Eucharist, as well as population growth and social migration, necessitated more and yet smaller churches, for approximately two hundred worshippers instead of five hundred as had previously been the case. In the absence of finance and building materials, the modest character of these newly built churches was in line with contemporary developments in design and with the economic context. In addition to this exponential growth, the pressing question as to which liturgical, theological and architectural guidelines had to be observed left its mark on the post-war landscape of churches. The wishes and initiatives of local communities finally reached church authorities.

i) The papal fiat on liturgical renewal and Modern art

In his encyclical *Mediator Dei et Hominum* (1947), Pius XII praised and supported both the study of the Liturgy and liturgical renewal:

While we derive no little satisfaction from the wholesome results of the movement just described [referring to the development of Liturgical Movement by the Benedictines], duty obliges us to give serious attention to this 'revival' as it is advocated in some quarters.²⁷

Official recognition of the Liturgical Movement had been a long time coming, and only now was the highest ecclesiastical authority overtly supporting its principles. In the chapter on the development of the Liturgy, the pope proceeded to state that certain aspects of the Liturgy were liable to change, for example because of the progress in fine arts and in particular architecture.²⁸ In regard to the liturgical arts, he stated that modern art should neither be universally despised nor rejected through prejudice, but should be given free scope 'provided that it preserves a correct balance between styles tending neither to extreme realism nor to excessive "symbolism"'. Nevertheless, further on he stated that he deployed and condemned those recent art works 'which at times openly shock Christian taste, modesty and devotion, and shamefully offend the true religious sense'.²⁹ Neither this 1947 encyclical, nor a 1950 papal pronouncement on sacred art,³⁰ prohibited new forms, materials and styles, provided that they met these sacred aspirations. However, the Church wanted to retain a certain degree of monumentality, in order to preserve the distinction between profane and ecclesiastical architecture.

These decrees can thus be considered as the formalization of the (liturgical and architectural) practices developed during the inter-war period, and even as tantamount

to the acceptance of Modern architecture. This 'licence' for a new church architecture, together with developments in modern(istic) architecture in general, paved the way for an ever-increasing abundance of interpretations, experiments, styles and attitudes. The churches that were built in Western Europe during the 1950s display the entire gamut of architectural styles, from highly traditional to ultramodern, provoking a spate of reactions. Distinguished clergy, architects, artists, lay people and unbelievers all intervened in the ensuing debate. In Belgium, the Church authorities initially reacted rather cautiously to the developments in Modern church architecture, apparently finding it difficult to break away from their distanced attitude towards church-building. The archdiocese of Mechlin-Brussels, no longer hindered by the need to obtain permission for its renewed liturgy and church architecture, slowly but surely took on board responsibility for a modern church-building policy and joined the movement that had long been present within the Church community. The breakthrough came in 1952, when the archdiocese finally decided to take on a more active role in church-building, setting up a central agency to supervise the decision-making process (for the creation of new parishes) and to obtain the necessary funds (for erecting new churches).

iii) *Domus Dei*

In 1952, in response to progressive changes in population and to parish reorganization, which together gave rise to the building of many new churches, the archdiocese set up Domus Dei as the Diocesan Workgroup for Church Building in Belgium. In the pastoral letter of 12 November 1952, which serves as Domus Dei's foundation charter, Cardinal van Roey wrote that:

To this day, the often too heavy responsibility for building a new church lies in the hands of the priest. [...] We have decided to proceed more efficiently from now on, and to appeal to the solidarity of all the parishioners in our diocese to support the new works that we have founded as 'Domus Dei — The House of God'.³¹

This charter gives a realistic perspective on the actual necessities: 'parishes that are too large have to be split up; new districts have to become new centres of parish life. Hence AN URGENT NEED FOR NEW CHURCHES. Hence the necessity of a central fund to supply this exceptional need'.³² Relying on the solidarity of the worshippers, a national fund-raising campaign was held annually on Church-building Day (Kerkenbouwdag). The campaign was supported by an annual bulletin, describing the general state of finances, local achievements and the need for new churches. The solidarity among worshippers proved to be very high: in three years, annual contributions had increased from five million to ten million Belgian francs.³³

After five years of focusing mainly on the organizational aspects of this building campaign, the archdiocese gradually started to work on form and content. In the annual bulletin of 1957, Domus Dei for the first time overtly adopted a positive attitude towards Modern church architecture:

It is gratifying how our architects strive to dissociate themselves from a traditional architectural style that no longer represents the spirit of our age. Amongst them, the opinion that the religious character of a building is not tied to outward appearances but that it derives from the internal harmony of the space, gains support.³⁴

The archdiocese's new attitude towards Modern church architecture coincided with its positive attitude towards contemporary liturgical requirements. Lacking any systematic enforcement by the clerical powers, the Liturgical Movement had been merely tolerated by the Belgian episcopate during the inter-war period and therefore had not been able to fully develop in Belgium.³⁵ Only after the Second World War, and especially from 1956–57 onwards, did the liturgical renewal emerge not only from the bottom up but also with the support of Belgium's clerical authorities, who now presided over the Liturgical Movement, for instance by means of (inter-)diocesan commissions,³⁶ and who overtly expressed sympathy for local initiatives concerning liturgy.³⁷ The turning point came with a 1959 competition for Modern church architecture.

iiii) *Pro Arte Christiana*

Seizing upon the new climate and the general quest for authentic sacred art, a cooperative society, *Pro Arte Christiana*, was founded in 1957 to develop and promote Christian art and to support Christian artists.³⁸ The initiator, the friar and painter Ceroen De Bruycker of the Franciscan monastery in Vaalbeek, endeavoured to end the long-standing separation between contemporary art and the Church. De Bruycker therefore referred to the encyclical *Mediator Dei*: modern works should neither be discriminated against nor renounced en bloc.³⁹ Between 1958 and 1961, *Pro Arte Christiana* organized a series of competitions, called the 'Great Christmas Competitions in Religious Art' ('Grote Kerstprijsen voor Religieuze Kunst'). Although these competitions and related exhibitions caused some uproar,⁴⁰ from the outset *Pro Arte Christiana* could rely on the active support of the ecclesiastical authorities.

Pro Arte Christiana's 1959 competition, organized under the auspices of Domus Dei, broached the subject of Modern church architecture. Contestants were asked to design a parish church for a new district in Mortsel, outside Antwerp, to accommodate five hundred worshippers. De Bruycker elucidated the intention of the organizers as follows:

Although we apply ourselves to a contemporary realization, [...] the main concern is not to find a new form. Any new external form will only be admissible when the community of the Catholic faithful finds a 'home' in this church, where she can commune with "The Father".⁴¹

The first prize was awarded unanimously — and contrary to all expectations — to the design by the then still largely unknown architect Marc Dessauvage, who had just graduated from the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture in Ghent. Striking out on a new course, his rather revolutionary design restated the three primary architectural functions of shelter, support and enclosure in an organic, austere and rigorous way (Fig. 9).⁴² His basic idea was to screen off and keep free a space in which the community could develop itself — or, as Bekaeert formulated it, 'the sacred dance floor, the clearing in the woods, the empty square, the expectation'.⁴³

According to Bekaeert, Dessauvage's design was the only one that demonstrated a profoundly renewed insight into church-building. The international jury,⁴⁴ criticizing other competition entries for their lack of a vestibule, a 'hidden' altar or complex tower constructions, had explicitly formulated its hope that Dessauvage's design would be executed. But this radical design was not appreciated by everyone and provoked fierce discussions.⁴⁵ Partly as a result of this controversy, the church council of Mortsel decided not to comply with the jury's opinion. Instead, they carried out the design of Van den Bogaeerde and Van Driessche, which had been classified joint second (Fig. 10).

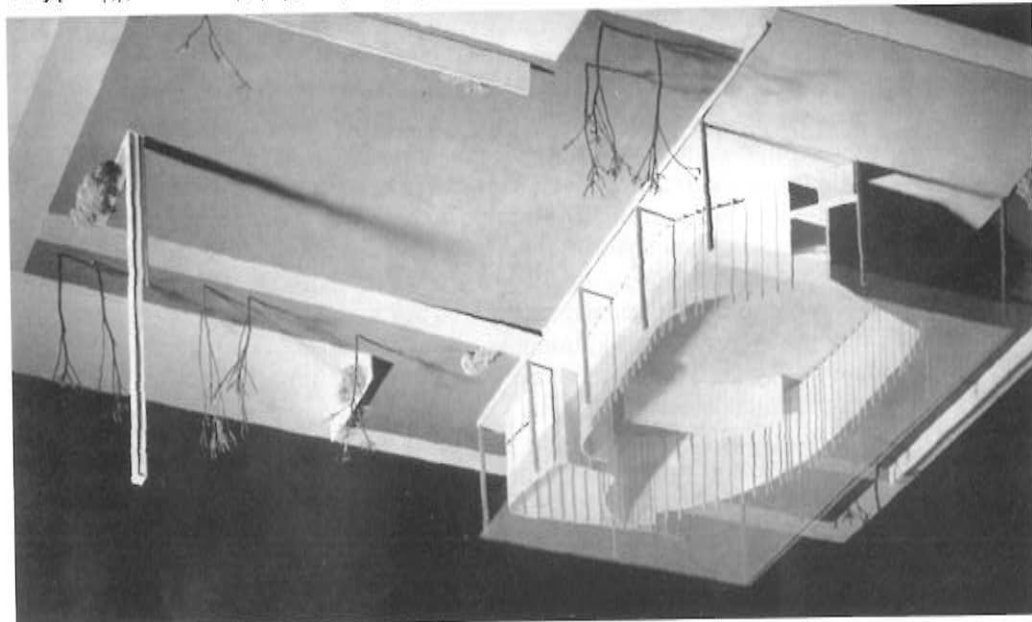


Fig. 9. Model of (unexecuted) design winning first prize in the Pro Arte Christiana competition, Marc Dessauvage, 1959 (Mechlin, Archives of the Archdiocese, Pro Arte Christiana)

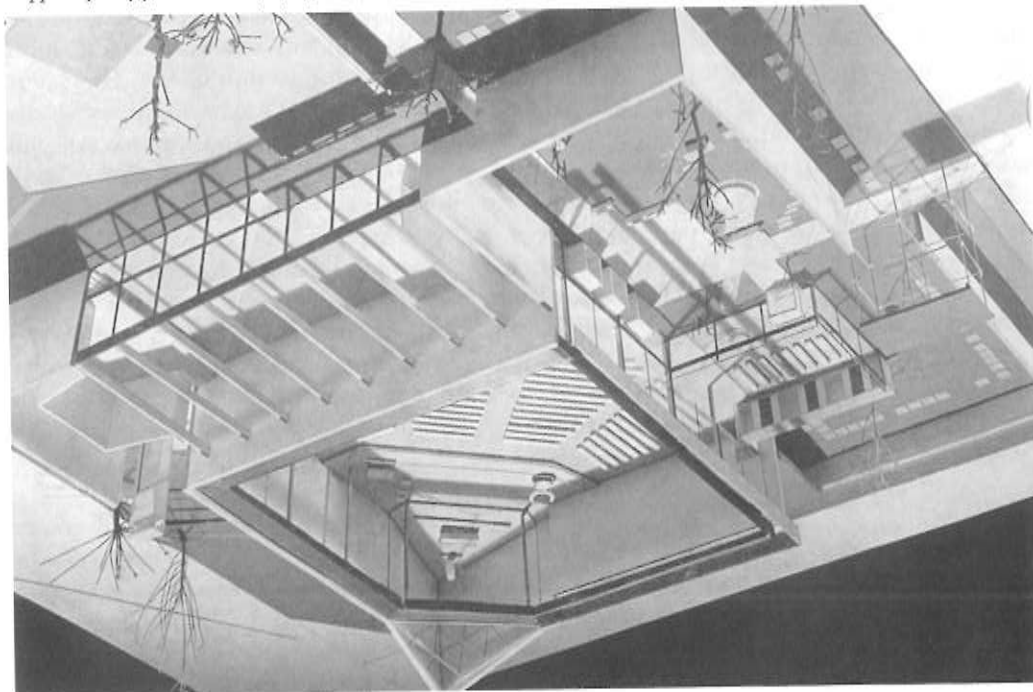


Fig. 10. Model of (executed) design winning second prize in the Pro Arte Christiana competition, Jean Van Den Bogard and Jos Van Driessche, 1959 (Mechlin, Archives of the Archdiocese, Pro Arte Christiana)

THE RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE OF MARC DESSAUVAGE

Although Dessauvage's design for Pro Arte Christiana was not realized, it became a touchstone in the development of Modern church architecture in Belgium. As for Dessauvage himself, it meant the start of a successful career. In line with the sobriety of the Pro Arte Christiana design, in which architecture did not distract from the liturgy, Dessauvage developed a methodology and concept for a contemporary church building, based on three basic principles. First and foremost, he reconsidered the layout of the altar zone and the relative position of the three liturgical 'poles' — altar, ambo and the priest's chair — thus introducing a new dynamic between the Word and the Eucharist. Second, the wooden benches for the worshippers were clustered into two or three groups around the liturgical centre, to enhance the direct contact between the priest and the community, the priest's chair being positioned in such a way that he occupied the fourth side and completed the 'circle' of the community around the altar. The third principle was the differentiation between primary spaces (altar zone and benches for the worshippers) and secondary spaces (spaces for individual worship, sacraments such as christening and confession, and circulation).⁴⁶ These three principles, which Dessauvage would adopt repeatedly as leitmotifs but which he interpreted and adjusted according to the specific context, led to the concept of the 'house church': a church where the community could feel 'at home', a house for the community. Architecturally speaking, Dessauvage also sought to integrate his churches into their respective neighbourhoods. He eschewed monumentality, meaningless symbolism and hollow tradition, and instead envisaged an authentic sacred space, whose spatial and architectural expression harmonized with the liturgical experience. Remaining true to this methodology, Dessauvage created a coherent *œuvre* of some twenty churches and religious centres — either new-build or refurbished — which were mainly but not solely situated within the archdiocese. A case in point is St Aldegondede's church in Ezemaal, typical and original in its simplicity.

DESSAUVAGE'S CHURCH OF ST ALDEGONDE IN EZEMAAL (1962–65)

This small church is one of Dessauvage's first realizations, after the refurbished chapel in St-Andries (1960) and the chapel of St Joseph the Workman in Willebroek (1962–64; Fig. 11), which was in fact a version of his winning Pro Arte Christiana scheme. Designed for a limited budget, the architectural project for Ezemaal is, in terms of forms and materials alike, simple and non-monumental, reflecting 'positive human values in an authentic universal concept',⁴⁷ lacking any architectural ambition beyond fulfilling its function. A preliminary design was rejected by Domus Dei's advisory committee as being too expensive, because it also included a parish hall. Dessauvage retained the essence of this design, which derived from the relative position of the liturgical objects and the worshippers. The primary space was shaped like a 'V'; the wooden benches for the worshippers were divided into two groups, one of them turned by 45 degrees, so that two main sightlines intersected at the altar zone. As for the secondary spaces, the open space between the two groups of benches served as circulation space and accommodated the baptismal rite, while two confessionals marked the transition from the church to the sacristy in an almost organic way (Fig. 12). The primary and secondary

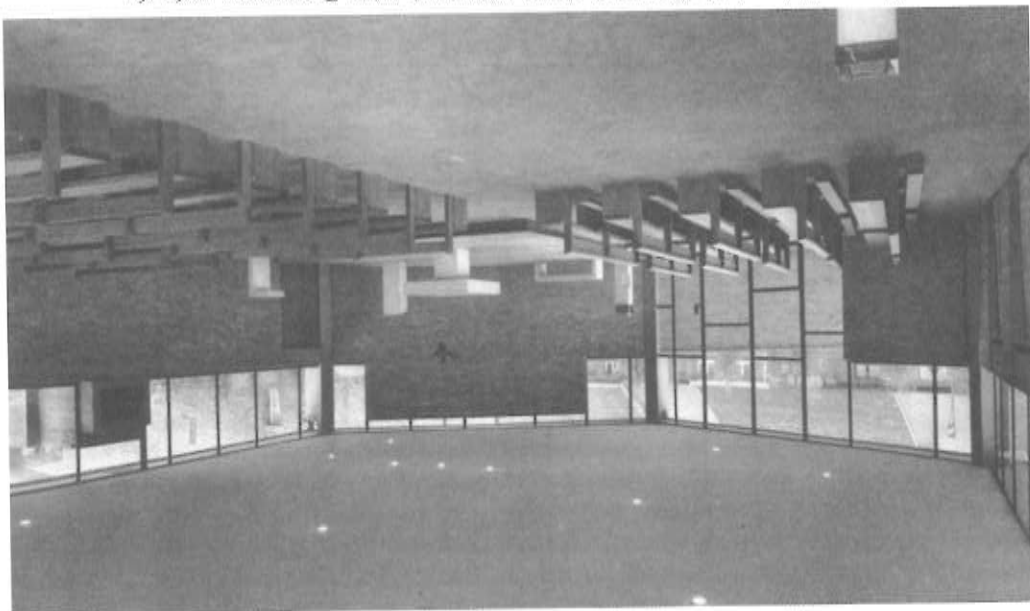


Fig. 11. St Joseph the Workman chapel, Willebroek, Marc Dessauvage, 1962–64
(Photo: Stephanie Van de Voorde, 2005)

spaces are encased by a brick wall, whose varying height indicates the different functions of the church; the wall is relatively low near the entrance and the secondary spaces, its height gradually increasing alongside the wooden benches so as to reach its maximum height at the altar zone. Likewise, the height and the slope of the roof plans reflect the intensity of the liturgical event; while the secondary spaces are covered with a low, flat roof, the slightly sloping roof planes above the wooden benches direct attention towards the liturgical focus and highpoint — the altar — itself under a flat roof at maximum height. Enhancing the spatial experience inside, this brick wall is almost completely closed; daylight only enters through the entrance and through the elongated triangular windows bridging the gap between the different roof planes (Fig. 13). Dessauvage consciously limited the architectural elements and means used to define the church's architectural and liturgical setting, the church design no longer reflecting the immense power of God but instead the simplicity of the worshipper's community. The human scale of this small and modest church, which had cost roughly the same as a house, was emphasized in the title of a newspaper article: 'With just a million [Belgian francs], Ezeemaal has built a poor yet revolutionary church'.⁴⁸

Dessauvage (probably in collaboration with Bekart, who guided Dessauvage in his writings, making it difficult to discern who is 'holding the pen') described the Ezeemaal church in the first issue of *Kontakt met Donus Dei* (*Contact with Donus Dei*).⁴⁹ This new, annual magazine, published from 1965–66 onwards, informed the archdiocese's contemporary church-building policy, containing as it did detailed descriptions of new churches, accompanied by architectural drawings and other illustrations. No less than three of the seven churches discussed in the first issue were designed by Dessauvage,

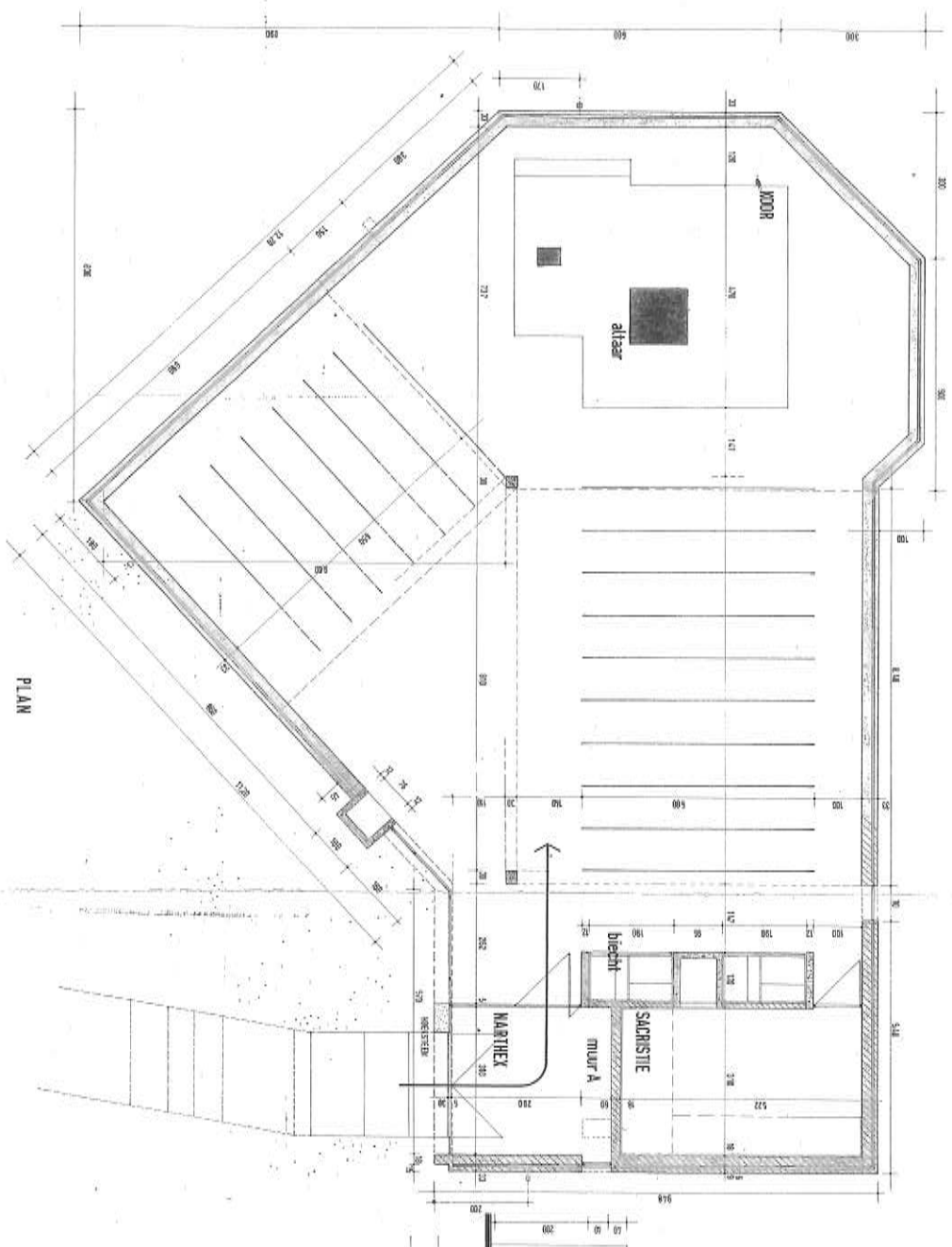


Fig. 12. Plan, St Aldegonde, Ezemaal, Marc Dessauvage, 1962-65 (Leuven: KADOC (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Documentation and Research Centre for Religion, Culture and Society), Fonds Dessauvage)

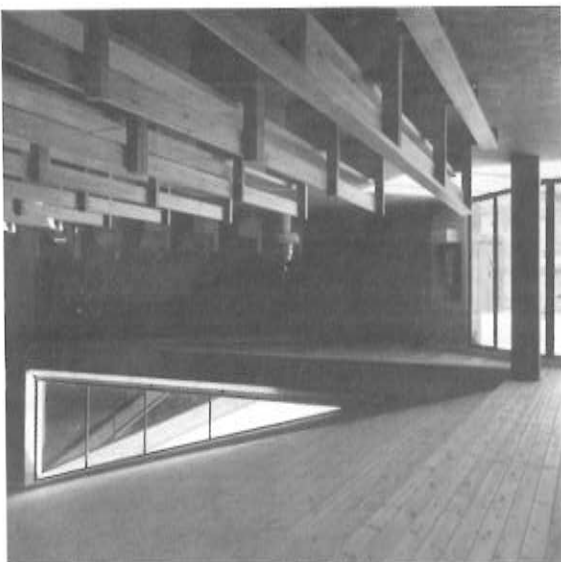


Fig. 13. Interior, St Aldegond, Ezenaai, Marc Dessauvage, 1962–65 (Leuven: KADOC, Fonds Dessauvage)

and in the succeeding issues his work would again be prominent, cementing his position as the archdiocese's church-builder during the years that followed. In contrast with the earliest editions of the annual *Domus Dei* bulletin, the new journal informed the laity about liturgical renewal and the sweeping changes in church architecture.⁵⁰ As well as discussing fundamental liturgical issues and their architectural implications, the journal contained general and more reflective articles (mostly written by Jos Fannes) examining specific themes in the development of church architecture, for example, 'The church in the city' ('De kerk in de stad'),⁵¹ 'Do we still need to build churches?' ('Faut-il encore construire des églises?')⁵² and 'Towards a new house-church' ('Vers une nouvelle maison-église').⁵³ These titles reflect the crisis into which the Church had fallen, a crisis for which Vatican II had brought no solution and against which, for that matter, also the concept of the house church proved inadequate — not because of any erosion of the concept's legitimacy but simply because church-building came to an almost complete standstill after 1970.

THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, OR THE CHURCH'S INERTIA

Conscious of the Church increasingly becoming an outdated institution, Pope John XXIII decided to organize the Second Vatican Council, which was held from 1962–65. The Council's members were charged with the arduous duty of spiritually renewing the Church, so as to bring about a fresh, regenerated liturgical life,⁵⁴ meeting the new demands of the modern era. One of the official documents emanating from Vatican II is the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, discussing 'the reform and promotion of the liturgy', making it 'more suitable to the needs of our own times'.⁵⁵ Its main concern was the 'full and active participation by all the people',⁵⁶ thereby — yet again — confirming the principles of the Liturgical Movement. Although the chapter on Sacred Art and

Sacred Furnishings contained very few guidelines on how to put these principles into practice, the general message was nevertheless clear:

The Church has [...] admitted changes in materials, style, or ornamentation prompted by the progress of the technical arts with the passage of time. [...] The Church has not adopted any particular style of art as her very own; she has admitted styles from every period according to the natural talents and circumstances of peoples, and the needs of the various rites [...]. The art of our own days, coming from every race and region, shall also be given free scope in the Church, provided that it adorns the sacred buildings and holy rites with due reverence and honour [...]. And when churches are to be built, let great care be taken that they be suitable for the celebration of liturgical services and for the active participation of the faithful. [...] There is to be an early revision of the canons and ecclesiastical statutes which [...] refer especially to the appropriately dignified and well-planned construction of sacred buildings, the form and construction of altars, [...] the Eucharistic tabernacle, [...] the baptistery, [...]. Laws which seem less suited to the reformed liturgy are to be brought into harmony with it, or else abolished; and any which are helpful are to be retained [...] or introduced.⁵⁷

Although the Constitution did not specifically pronounce upon the spatial design of church buildings, it had a far-reaching effect on church interiors. Whereas previously stress had been laid on the monumentality of the church building as the visible manifestation of the Church, the Constitution now emphasized that the main function of the building was to serve the gathering of the community in relation to God.⁵⁸ This was translated (among other things) into the focus on a single, freestanding altar (without side altars), the separation of the altar and tabernacle, and the introduction of the ambonear the altar.⁵⁹ In hindsight, an analysis of Marc Dessauvage's churches shows that he anticipated these decrees in his designs from the late 1950s onwards.

Although it marks an important step in the history of church architecture and liturgy, Vatican II brought little more than the acknowledged quest for renewal which had begun half a century before. Vatican II thus became rightly known as the Council of the Church's *aggiornamento* (the 'keeping up with the times').⁶⁰ Furthermore, by permitting but neither arousing nor stimulating innovation, Vatican II failed to anticipate the impending, profound ecclesiastical crisis, which was also enhanced by general social and cultural phenomena, making the *aggiornamento* somewhat outdated by the end of the Council. Towards the end of the 1960s, the crisis came to a head; the meaning of the Church and the church building in the modern world was questioned and Vatican II showed little grasp of this fundamental issue. Dominus Dei's contemplative articles indicate the comprehensive nature of this crisis, for instance, 'Do we still need to build churches?' ('Faut-il encore construire des églises?').⁶¹

CONCLUSION

In writing this history of fifty years of church-building in Belgium, unexpected findings have come to light. First and foremost, the concept of the Liturgical Movement is essential for obtaining a good grasp and an accurate reading of church buildings. Although it began with miscellaneous initiatives springing from the grass roots and did not reach full maturity in Belgium until the 1950s and 1960s, it should be perceived as a

continuous thread running through the history of church architecture during that half-century. Deemed the sole constant running through our historical overview, the Liturgical Movement was thus decisive yet not necessarily predominant, as it was both supplemented and reinforced by other significant strategies and agencies, social, cultural, political and economic factors also proving essential to the development of twentieth-century church-building. Although such factors were not always embedded in architecture, nor in liturgy, they nevertheless made a profound impact on the architectural and liturgical development of the twentieth-century church. Consequently, through examining these different (temporally specific) influences, a variety of conceptions of 'modern' church-building can be identified. The process of evolution — from the inter-war church as a building accommodating religious, liturgical and parochial functions, towards the post-war concept of the church as an architectural programme designed to stimulate a modern Christian community — proves to be crucial in gaining a full understanding of twentieth-century church architecture. Marc Dessauvage's architecture was crucial in this evolution, as he combined the innovative principles of inter-war church design with contemporary needs of the Christian community.

During the inter-war period, new church buildings were often designed from a renewed socio-religious point of view. Comparable with the Liturgical Movement's aim to intensify the worshippers' participation in the service, Catholic Action and Parish Action aimed at a closer inter-relationship between religion and modern society. The church building was to be the linchpin in the organization of the religious life, offering a space simultaneously accommodating both the liturgy and parish activities. Given that strong socio-religious approach, most of the inter-war churches were not only built for but, even more, by the local community. Although the inter-war church was very different from the nineteenth-century church, the local community adhered to a church being recognizable as such, and hence the basilical plan, the tower and other traditional features found wide application. Consequently, the architectural characteristics of these churches were not radically modern, but they accorded with the stylistic diversity evident in contemporary secular architecture. Due to this — albeit restrained — adherence to specific traditional elements, inter-war developments in church-building are generally not considered positively, let alone as innovative. The inter-war church is often represented as hardly revolutionary, yet the changes which occurred during the inter-war period are no less profound, albeit more in a socio-religious sphere than an architectural one.

However, from the 1950s onwards this policy of 'renewal through tradition' proved inadequate. The architectural and liturgical changes or innovations of the inter-war period did not fulfil the need to adapt the Church to the requirements of modern, post-war society. From this date, the acceptance of Modern architecture for Belgian church-building was less the result of new liturgical and religious insights than of a change in Church policy. Indeed, under Mgr Theunys, the ecclesiastical authorities took responsibility for the first time in twentieth-century Belgian church architecture for developing a modern church-building policy, promoting initiatives such as *Domus Dei* and *Pro Arte Christiana*. Responding architecturally to these initiatives, but also building upon the ideas of the Liturgical Movement and Catholic Action, Marc Dessauvage

conceived the church as a reconciliation of the Church and society, instead of as a representation of twentieth-century Catholicism. In seeking authenticity, community spirit and simplicity, his concept of the 'house church' was based on a liturgy put at the service of the community. Because of its Modern and sober layout, this church was hardly distinguishable from its secular environment; a case in point is the elimination of the tower in nearly all of Dessauvage's church designs. Nevertheless, this integration of the church building into the community it served also constitutes the culmination of one of the aims of Parish Action, namely lay participation in all aspects of liturgical and parish life; if the design of the monumental inter-war church of, for instance, St Peter and St Paul, with its huge towers, is completely different from Dessauvage's 'house church', the principles underlying the both remain similar. Hence the reconciliation of Church and society through an active participation in liturgy and the integration of the church building within the Christian community were fundamentals for church-builders in both the inter-war period and the 1960s, well preceding Vatican II. The Church's *aggiornamento* needs more than ever to be understood as 'keeping up with the ideas of the times', and the ideas underlying this Church Council had already evolved much further by the time of Vatican II's closure.

All in all, the post-war period — and the 1960s in particular — proved to constitute an extremely chaotic period as the architectural, liturgical, socio-cultural, anthropological and theological development of the concept of the church building rapidly evolved. At the end of the 1960s this resulted in the conception of the church not solely as an ecclesiastical centre but as a polyvalent socio-religious centre, advancing the integration of Christian and modern values. This can thus be perceived as the ultimate result of the search, begun around 1914, for the Church's place in contemporary society.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like express our sincere gratitude to the reviewers for their suggestions and to Professor Judi Loach for editing this article.

NOTES

1. Geert Bekaert, *In één of ander huis. Kerkbouw op een keerpunt* (Tiel, 1967), pp. 12–14.
2. Frédéric Debuyss, 'Church Architecture and Christian Celebration', *Liturgical Arts*, 32 (1963), pp. 2–9.
3. This article is based on original research, primarily within the scope of the authors' unpublished MA dissertations, but subsequently completed and updated with additional source material and literature: Anne-Françoise Morel, 'De Architecturale Represenatie van het Katholicisme: Interbellumkerken in het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest' (MA dissertation, Ghent University, 2005); Stephanie Van de Voorde, Time Broos and Johanna Vermeir, 'Marc Dessauvage en de evolutie van het kerkgebouw' (MA dissertation, Ghent University, 2005). This research is based on archival source material including: parish archives, archives of the archdiocese of Mechlin-Brussels, Mechlin; minutes, Royal Commission of Monuments and Sites, Brussels; Kadoc Cultusgebouwen en Erediensten, Brussels; Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest; parish archives; field research and a comprehensive literature study on the subjects of liturgy and (church) architecture in the twentieth century. For a descriptive reading list and a complete list of the sources consulted, one can refer to the bibliographies in the MA dissertations.
4. 'Mg. Theeuwus heeft een riskant spel gespeeld. En dat alleen is in ons officiële land al het vermelden waard. Het risico dat hij enkele jaren geleden op zich nam met Dessauvage een aantal belangrijke en delicate

- opdrachten te geven, werd echter ruimschoots beloond: Geert Bekaeert, 'Met amper 1 miljoen bouwde Ezeemaal arme maar revolutionaire kerk', in *Verzamelde Opstellen 1. Stapstenen 1950-1965*, ed. Geert Bekaeert (Brussels, 1985), pp. 318-21 (p. 319).
- 5 'Ik weet bepaald goed waar ik met mijn ideeën een kans krijg en waar niet, en daar handel ik ook naar'; Marc Dessauvage quoted in Markus Verscharen, 'Peijstersplaatsen voor Gods volk onderweg ... de kerken van Marc Dessauvage' (MA dissertation, Sint-Lucas School of Architecture, Ghent, 1989), p. 8.
- 6 Frédéric Debussé, 'Vers une nouvelle maison-église. Essai de recapitulation et de synthèse', *L'Art d'Église*, 41 (1973), pp. 18-21.
- 7 'En Belgique et en France, nous devons reconstruire des centaines d'églises et il n'est pas sûr que nous soyons prêts à le faire d'une façon plus satisfaisante qu'après 1918. [...] Il faut d'abord nous rendre compte que les grands facteurs religieux et humains qui commandent les programmes liturgiques qui se développent en plein évolution et font l'objet de controverses. [...] L'admirable mouvement liturgique qui se développe en Belgique depuis une quarantaine d'années [...] oblige à repenser le plan de l'église. [...] Malheureusement nous n'avons pas en France et en Belgique une œuvre parfaitement satisfaisante à montrer, qui permette de faire sentir au clergé responsable de la construction des églises, la valeur d'une architecture conforme aux exigences de l'économie, à la logique structurale et au goût d'une sensibilité nette et pure. [...] L'architecture religieuse en Belgique et en France a quinze ans de retard sur celle de la Suisse allemande, de l'Autriche et de l'Allemagne'; Pie Raymond Régamey, 'La Reconstruction des églises et ses problèmes', *La Maison*, 10 (1946), pp. 307-10.
- 8 Ambrosius Verheul and Paul Leemans, 'Liturgisch leven', in *De kerk in Vlaanderen: pastoraal-sociologische studie van het leven en de structuur der kerk*, ed. Jan Kerkhofs and Jean Van Houltte (Tielt, 1962), pp. 150-66 (p. 155).
- 9 Geert Bekaeert, 'Moderne Kerkelijke Kunst in Vlaanderen', in *De kerk in Vlaanderen*, pp. 491-509 (p. 495).
- 10 Louis Wilmelt, 'Quelques Travaux des Ateliers d'Arts de Maredsous', *L'Artisan Liturgique*, 19 (1930), p. 388; T. D'Arges, 'Les Ateliers de La Croix-Latine', *L'Artisan Liturgique*, 41 (1936), pp. 448-49.
- 11 Pius X, *Codex Iuris Canonici* (Rome, 1933), can. 1164.
- 12 *Handelingen en decreten van het Vde Provinciale Concilie van Mechelen* (Brussels, 1938), p. 97.
- 13 Morel, 'De Architecturale Representatie', Vol. Ia, Ib: Gazetteer.
- 14 Concrete could only be used in churches under certain conditions. For instance, it was an express condition that the consecration crosses were not made of concrete but of stone: Pius X, *Codex Iuris Canonici* (Rome, 1933), can. 1161, 1164, 1165, 1167, 1198, 1279.
- 15 For more information on the use of concrete in church buildings, see, for example, Stephanie Van de Voorde, 'L'Application innovante du béton armé dans la construction d'églises en Belgique. Béton sacré ou usine à prière?', in *Edifice & Artifice. Histories constructives (Recueil de textes issus du Premier congrès francophone d'histoire de la construction, Paris, 19-21 juin 2008)*, ed. Robert Carvais et al. (Paris, 2010), pp. 587-95; Stephanie Van de Voorde, 'Bouwen in beton in België (1890-1975): Samenstel van kennis, experiment en innovatie' (PhD dissertation, Ghent University, 2011) (see in particular the chapter on reinforced concrete in church buildings, pp. 274-328, which provides a list for further reading).
- 16 'apparaît à l'art médiéval et quand même très moderne'; Eugène Augustin Roulin, *Nos Églises, liturgie, architecture, mobilier, peinture et sculpture* (Paris, 1938), p. 418.
- 17 The fundamental principles of Catholic Action were outlined by Pius X in the encyclical *Il Fermo Proposito* (Rome, 1905).
- 18 Paul Misner, 'Catholic Labour and Catholic Action: the Italian Context of Quadragesimo anno', *Catholic Historical Review*, 4 (2004), pp. 1-3.
- 19 For example, in the Church of the Annunciation, Ixelles, a member of the vestry was appointed as architect, namely Camille Daman; Jean-François Van Cauwelaert, *De L'abbaye Notre Dame de la Cambre à la paroisse Notre Dame de l'Annonciation: huit siècles de vie rurale et d'urbanisation aux confins des actuelles communes d'Ixelles, Uccles, Forest et St. Gilles* (Ixelles, 2004), n.p.
- 20 Morel, 'De Architecturale Representatie', Vol. Ia, Ib: Gazetteer.
- 21 See, for instance, St Suzanna, Schaerbeek, and St Peter and St Paul, Neder-Overheembeek.
- 22 Fonds Guianotte, Archives d'Architecture Moderne, Brussels; Inventaire 8834/b, la nouvelle église de Ste-Thérèse à Schaerbeek, Royal Commission of Monuments and Sites, Brussels.
- 23 Brussels, FOD Justitie Afdeling Cultusgebouwen en Erediensten, dossier Neder-Overheembeek: St-Nicolaas, Mechlin, Parochial Archives, Neder-Overheembeek: St-Pieter en Paulus.
- 24 *Neder-Overheembeek, 10 jaar Katholieke werking in gewest* (Neder-Overheembeek, 1935).
- 25 Neder-Overheembeek, Parochial Archive St-Pieter en Paulus, Miscellanea.

- 26 *Neder-Oeverhembeek*, 10 jaar.
- 27 Pius XII, *Mediator Dei et Hominum* (Rome, 1947), art. 7, at <http://www.vatican.org> (accessed on 24 October 2008).
- 28 *Ibid.*, art. 56.
- 29 *Ibid.*, art. 195.
- 30 Pius XII, quoted in Thomas F. O'Meara, 'Modern Art and the Sacred: the Prophetic Ministry of Alain Courtyer, O.P.', *Spirituality Today*, 38 (1986), at <http://www.spiritualitytoday.org> (accessed on 28 October 2008).
- 31 'Tot op heden berustte de vaak al te zware verantwoordelijkheid voor de bouw van een nieuwe kerk op de schouders van de pastoor die hiermede belast werd. [...] Wij hebben beslist in het vervolg doelmattiger te werk te gaan en beroep te doen op de solidariteit van al onze diocesanen, om het nieuwe werk te ondersteunen dat Wij, onder de benaming "Domus Dei — Het Huis van God", hebben gesticht'; Jozef Ernest van Roey, 'Stichtingssoortkonde van Domus Dei', *Domus Dei*, 1 (1953), p. 4.
- 32 'te grote parochiën moesten gesplitst worden, nieuwe wijken moesten nieuwe centra worden van parochiaal leven. VANPAAR EEN DRINCENDE BEHOEFTE AAN NIEUWE KERKEN. Vandaar ook de noodzakelijkheid van een centraal fonds om in deze uitzonderlijke nood te voorzien'; van Roey, 'Stichtingssoortkonde', *Domus Dei*, 1 (1953), p. 1.
- 33 'Balans na 6 maand werking', *Domus Dei*, 1 (1953), p. 1; 'Overzicht van het dienstjaar 1953–1954', in *Domus Dei*, 2 (1954), pp. 2–3; 'Hoever staan we?', *Domus Dei*, 3 (1955), p. 1.
- 34 'Het is verheugend hoe onze architecten zich trachten los te maken van een conventionele bouwtrant die niet meer beantwoordt aan de geest van onze tijd. Bij hen groeit het inzicht dat het religieuze karakter van een gebouw niet aan uitwendigheden vastzit maar voortspruit uit een inwendige harmonie van de ruimte'; 'De plannen zijn klaar', *Domus Dei*, 5 (1957), p. 2.
- 35 Verheul and Leemans, 'Liturgisch leven', p. 159.
- 36 One instance of these commissions is the group of liturgists and pastors of the archdiocese which drew up renewed, official directions for the celebration of Mass. These directions appeared in 1957, entitled 'Rond het altaar des Heren' ('Round the Lord's altar'), with a preface by Cardinal van Roey.
- 37 A case in point of this overt support is the annual workshop organized by the abbey of Tongerlo and Affligem. As a continuation of the 'Liturgical weeks' created by the abbey at Leuven, these workshops had a remarkably high number of participants and, more importantly, enjoyed the confidence and sympathy of the Belgian clerical authorities.
- 38 Koenaard De Wolf, 1957–2007: *een halve eeuw Pro Arte Christiana in Vaalbeek*. Geroen De Bruycker & Rik Van Schil (Antwerpen, 2006).
- 39 Geroen De Bruycker, *Kerstprijs voor Religieuze Kunst 1957 St.-Franciscus — Katalogus* (Vaalbeek, 1958), w.p. 40. In 1959, the Action Committee to safeguard Christian dignity in religious art (*Aktiekomitee ter vrijwaring van de kristelijke waardigheid in religieuze kunst*) was founded, aiming to oppose the renewal of religious art as pursued by De Bruycker and Pro Arte Christiana: De Wolf, 1957–2007: *een halve eeuw Pro Arte Christiana*, p. 37.
- 41 'Alhoewel wij ons beijveren om een eigentijdse verwezenlijking, toch willen wij er met de volste nadruk op wijzen dat de hoofdbekommernis niet mag zijn: een nieuwe vorm te vinden. Elke nieuwe uiterlijk zal maar goed en aanvaardbaar zijn als de gelovige katholieke gemeenschap in deze kerk een "thuis" vindt waar ze zich één voelt met "De Vader"': Geroen De Bruycker, *Tweede Grote Kerstprijs voor Religieuze Kunst 1959 — Programma* (Vaalbeek, 1959), w.p. 42 'Le concours d'architecture "Pro Arte Christiana"', *L'Art d'Église*, 28 (1960), pp. 33–35.
- 43 'de sacrale dansvloer, de open plek in het bos, het lege plein, de verwachting'; Geert Bekert and Luc Verpoest, *Marc Dessauvage 1931/1984* (Wommelgem, 1987), p. 13.
- 44 'The jury consisted of Hermann Baur (as Chairman), Rudolf Schwarz, Xavier Arsène-Henry and Michel Marol, all prominent figures in the field of modern church architecture.
- 45 See, for instance, Lode Willcockx, 'Beschouwingen over de prijskamp "Pro Arte Christiana" 1959', *Gazet van Antwerpen*, 2 December 1959, p. 11. An overview of criticisms by architects as well as clergy was reprinted in the general catalogue of *Pro Arte Christiana: Oeverzichtskatalogus* (Vaalbeek, 1964), w.p.
- 46 Frédéric Debust, *Architecture moderne et célébration chrétienne* (Bruges, 1966), p. 50; Frédéric Debust, 'Architecture moderne et célébration chrétienne', *L'Art d'Église*, 130 (1965), pp. 145–57.
- 47 'positive menselijke waarden van deze leefwijze in een autentieke en universeel moderne conceptie'; Marc Dessauvage, 'Ezemaal Sint-Aldegondis', *Kontak met Domus Dei*, 1 (1966), pp. 10–12 (p. 10).
- 48 Geert Bekert, 'Met amper 1 miljoen bouwde Ezemaal arme maar revolutionaire kerk', *De standaard der Letteren*, 10 July 1965; reprinted in *Verzamelde Opstellen 1. Stijpslepen 1950–1965*, ed. Geert Bekert (Brussels, 1985), pp. 318–21.

- 49 Dessauvage, 'Ezemaal Sint-Aldegondis'.
- 50 Domus Dei, 'Ter Inleiding', *Konstakt met Domus Dei*, 1 (1966), pp. 4–5.
- 51 Jos Fannes, 'De kerk in de stad', *Konstakt met Domus Dei*, 4 (1969), pp. 6–10.
- 52 Jos Fannes, 'Faut-il encore construire des églises?', *Contact avec Domus Dei*, 5 (1971), pp. 6–10.
- 53 Frédéric Debussé, 'Vers une nouvelle maison-église', *Contact avec Domus Dei*, 7 (1973), pp. 6–11.
- 54 Herman Schmidt, 'De Constitutie over de H. Liturgie', *Streven*, 17 (1964), pp. 401–12.
- 55 John XXIII, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (Rome, 1963), art. 1 (at <<http://www.vatican.va>> (accessed on 24 October 2008).
- 56 John XXIII, *Constitution*, art 14.
- 57 John XXIII, *Constitution*, arts 122, 123, 124 and 128.
- 58 Brussels, Archives Architecture Moderne, Jos Fannes, *Evoluție in de kerkbouwopvatting*, May 1969.
- 59 Wolfgang Jean Stock, *Europaischer Kirchenbau 1950–2000 European Church Architecture* (Munich, 2002), p. 25.
- 60 Stock, *Europaischer Kirchenbau*, p. 17.
- 61 Fannes, 'Faut-il encore', *Contact avec Domus Dei*, 5 (1971), pp. 6–10.

