

# 'Wherever a few should gather'. The Liturgical Movement and Vatican II as a source for architectural transformation of churches in the context of adaptive reuse

*'Donde sea que unos pocos se reúnan'. El Movimiento Litúrgico y el Vaticano II como fuente para la transformación arquitectónica de las iglesias en el contexto de la reutilización adaptativa.*


Nikolaas Vande Keere · Hasselt University (Belgium), nikolaas.vandekeere@uhasselt.be

Bie Plevoets · Hasselt University (Belgium), bie.plevoets@uhasselt.be

Samuel Goyvaerts · Tilburg University (Netherlands), S.H.Goyvaerts@uvt.nl

Recibido: 30/07/2019

Aceptado: 17/01/2020

 <https://doi.org/10.17979/aarc.2020.7.0.6289>

## ABSTRACT

Due to a process of secularization many parish communities need to redefine their church use, reducing the liturgical space and bringing in other functions. In this contribution, we elaborate on the process of adapting existing churches to this reality. We argue that the spatial concepts developed by the Liturgical Movement in the context of Vatican II can become sources of inspiration. First, we define the relevant characteristics of the reform, instigated by figures like theologian Romano Guardini and architect Rudolf Schwarz. Second, we show how these characteristics can be applied in the case study of the Magdalena church in Bruges (Belgium). Rather than restoring the 19th century Gothic Revival church, we tried to translate its typology and layered quality into a contemporary space for liturgy and community, while at the same time opening up the church to its environment.

## KEYWORDS

Adaptive Reuse, Liturgical Movement, Vatican II, Community, Research by Design

## RESUMEN

Debido a un proceso de secularización, muchas comunidades parroquiales necesitan redefinir el uso de su iglesia, reduciendo el espacio litúrgico e incorporando otras funciones. En esta contribución, elaboramos el proceso de adaptación de las iglesias existentes a esta realidad. Argumentamos que los conceptos espaciales desarrollados por el Movimiento Litúrgico en el contexto del Vaticano II pueden convertirse en fuentes de inspiración. Primero, definimos las características relevantes de la reforma, instigadas por figuras como el teólogo Romano Guardini y el arquitecto Rudolf Schwarz. En segundo lugar, mostramos cómo se pueden aplicar estas características en el caso de la iglesia de la Magdalena, en Brujas (Bélgica). En lugar de restaurar la iglesia neogótica del siglo XIX, tratamos de traducir su tipología y calidad contrastada en un espacio contemporáneo para la liturgia y la comunidad, al tiempo que abrimos la iglesia a su entorno.

## PALABRAS CLAVE

Reutilización adaptativa, Movimiento Litúrgico, Concilio Vaticano II, comunidad, investigación por diseño

CÓMO CITAR: Vande Keere, Nikolaas, Bie Plevoets & Samuel Goyvaerts. 2020. «'Wherever a few should gather'. The Liturgical Movement and Vatican II as a source for architectural transformation of churches in the context of adaptive reuse». *Actas de Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporánea* 7: 36-51. <https://doi.org/10.17979/aarc.2020.7.0.6289>.

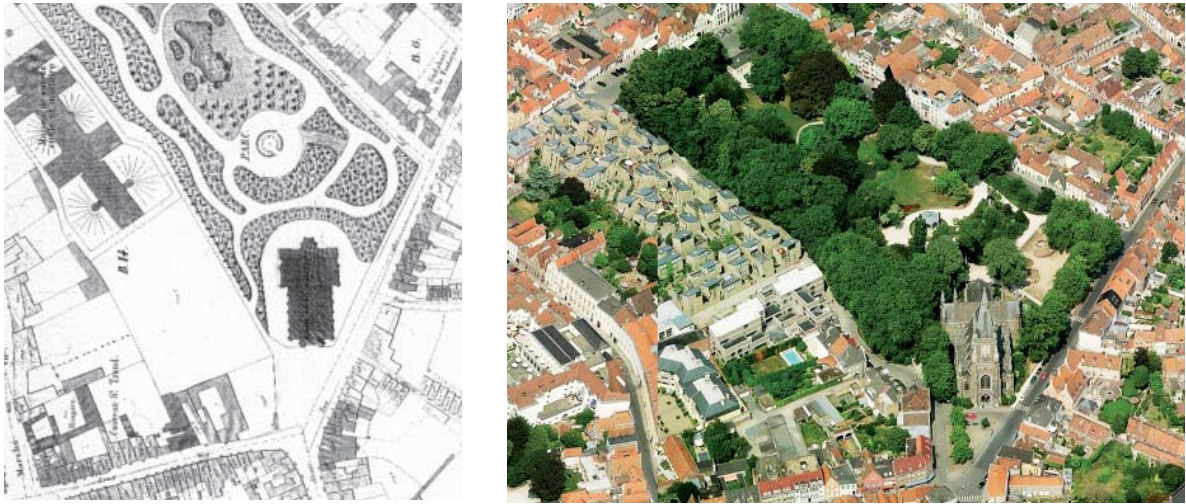


Fig. 01-02. Magdalena church, Bruges (Belgium); Popp map with situation of the church and the Astrid park around 1860 and aerial view with current situation.

## INTRODUCTION

The Altar was called *Christ* in former times, just as many other things were called *Christ* or the *body of Christ*: the congregation or the house in which it gathered or, very generally, the earth. This was meant so literally that the individual parts of the house were compared to the individual limbs of his body, the nave with the trunk, the transept with the outspread arms and the choir with the head. Thus Christ hung perpetually on the cross, and because he bowed his head in death, as the Gospel relates, the choir was sometimes built at an angle to the nave. And so within this image which was far more than a comparison it would be fitting to call the altar the head or the heart of the Lord, And this was surely the intention. (...)

Actually what separates us from these early teachings is not so much their content as the difference of language. Today we no longer connect the same images with the words and we put a new meaning into the old terms. When men spoke of the *body* or of the *body of Christ* in earlier times, they probably meant something quite different from what we mean when we speak about our body. And so to begin with we must try to make clear to ourselves what medieval men saw as *body*.

This can be quite readily recognized in the early pictures which show the body in its holiness. The bodies are shown as something radiant and all the most brilliant colors are used for them, all the colors of glowing, burning things. And the head is enveloped in the *halo* as if in a radiant sun (Schwarz 1958, 3-4).<sup>1</sup>

Due to a process of secularization of society, with a decreasing number of priests and fewer people attending mass weekly, a lot of churches are abandoned or underused. Many examples are at hand where a church is transformed to house a new, secular function that deviates, or in some cases even contrasts, with the spiritual or social character of the place. An alternative to a radical conversion is to bring in additional functions while continuing the use of (a part of) the church for Christian celebration. Instead of the perception of loss, the process of rethinking the church use, its architecture and interior arrangement may generate a positive dynamic in both the religious and secular community. In this paper, we elaborate on the spatial potential of the liturgical reform of Vatican II and the preceding Liturgical Movement and apply this in a proposal for the transformation of the Magdalena church in Bruges

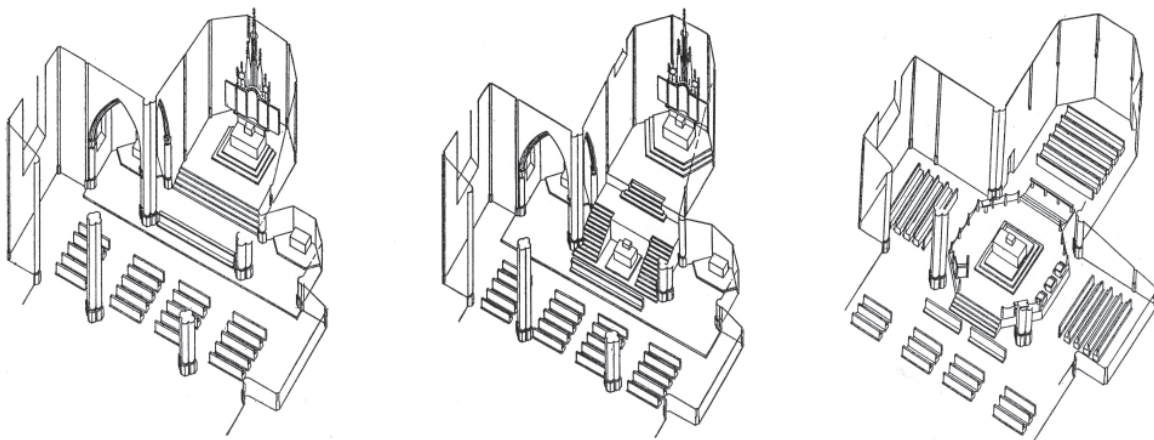


Fig. 03. St. Josef, Köln-Nippes (Germany), 1906-32-58; spatial rearrangement of choir and transept in time.

(Belgium) as an exemplary case. The reorganization of this church has been investigated in the context of a feasibility study carried out as part of a research program on adaptive reuse of churches in Flanders, Belgium. The aim of these studies is to investigate whether, and how, through research by design, a proposed new use can be implemented for an existing church building.<sup>2</sup>

The Magdalena church is located in the historical center of Bruges, and sits at the border of the 19th century Astrid Park with its front façade overlooking a small square to the south (Fig. 01-02). The church, protected as a monument since 1996, was constructed in the second half of the 19th century in Gothic Revival style following Victorian architecture in the United Kingdom and inspired by the figure of Augustus Welby Pugin.<sup>3</sup> The originally colorful polychromatic interior was whitewashed in 1960, and a few years later the altars in the choir and aisles were removed and a new altar was positioned according to the zeitgeist and in an attempt to follow the directions of Vatican II. The church is currently used by an active Christian community that seeks to experiment with new forms of ecclesial life, liturgy, modern spirituality and other activities. Instead of restoring the ornamented Gothic Revival character,

the community and the church administration wants to develop a plan which allows additional socio-cultural activities to take place and, in doing so, opening up the church to society at large, including the many tourists that visit Bruges. The religious use of the church, however, had to remain the core of the plan.

The challenge of this project was to reconcile the historical (and historicist) architecture of the church with the new functions and use. How to deal with the confrontation between the Gothic concept of a church as the mystical body of Christ (or its romanticized version in Gothic Revival) and the reuse of this church including the renewed and experimental liturgical requirements?

## VATICAN II AND THE LITURGICAL MOVEMENT

FOR THE CELEBRATION of the Lord's supper a moderately large, well-proportioned room is needed, in its center a table and on the table a bowl of bread and a cup of wine. The table may be decorated with candles and surrounded by seats for the congregation.

That is all. Table, space and walls make up the simplest church.

The table is the sustaining earth which rises up for the solemn celebration.

The cup is the innermost casing about the secret, its first form. As such, it is also the prototype of the people surrounding the table and of the walls surrounding the people and thus it is, as it were, an innermost church.

The candle is living light streaming out of the center.

The space is sacred abundance.

Walls and roof are the final outermost covering.

The little congregation sits or stands about the table. The Lord is in the center as he promised to be when he said that wherever a few should gather in his name he would be in the midst of them.

There have been greater forms of church building than this one but this is not the right time for them. We cannot continue on from where the last cathedrals left off. Instead we must enter into the simple things at the source of the Christian life. We must begin anew and our new beginning must be genuine (Schwarz 1958, 35-36).

In several ways, Vatican II can be considered a new beginning. Until today however, the scholarly discussion on this council as a continuous or a discontinuous event in the history of the Catholic Church and Western society remains (Faggioli 2012). When looking at liturgy, church architecture and arrangement, one would be inclined to see a severe discontinuity with the previous era. There seems to be a clear *before* Vatican II, with an exclusively Latin and clerical liturgy, a fixed high-altar against the choir-wall of the church, the priest with his back to the people attending mass, sitting or kneeling on benches row after row, praying the rosary or any other personal devotion, in a (neo)-Gothic pillar church. After the council, the priest is standing behind a table-altar, turned to the people, participating in a hall-like church without aisles. Although indeed a lot changed after the council, these changes did not come unexpectedly. The liturgical reforms of Vatican II were prepared by what is known as the 20th century Liturgical Movement (Haquin 2005; Reid 2016). To understand the conciliar liturgical reforms and its influence on church architecture and arrangement, it is paramount to study the liturgical and spatial ideas of the Liturgical Movement (Morel and Van de Voorde 2012). This will certainly nuance

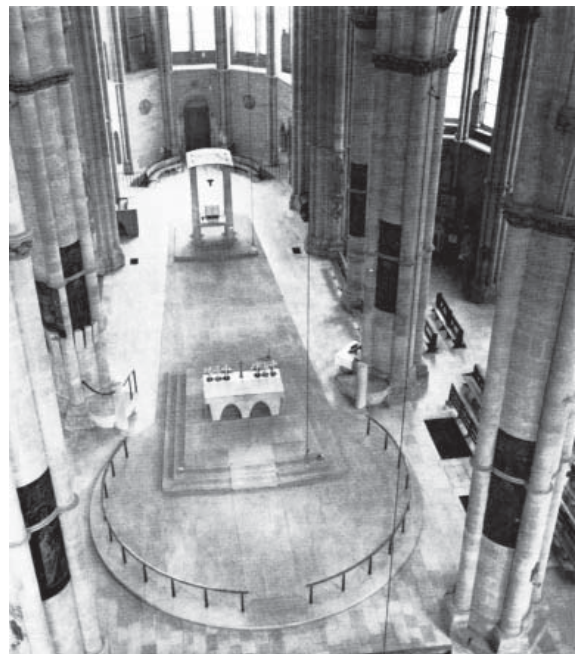
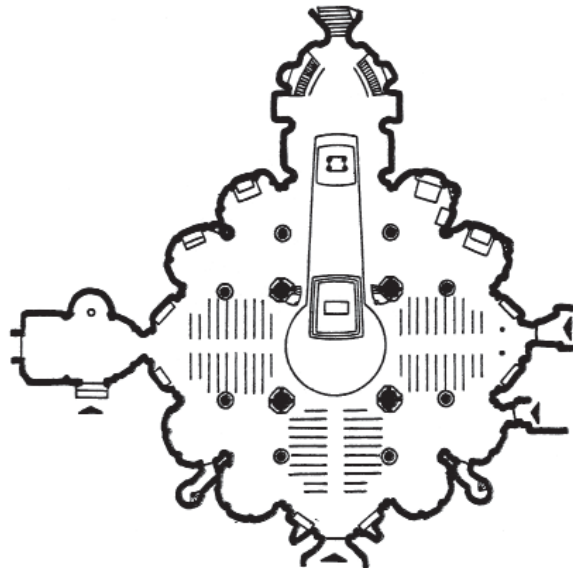


Fig. 04-05. Liebfrauenkirche, Trier (Germany), 1951; Schwarz shifts the altar to the center and positions the chairs in three aisles around it; the transformation of a longitudinal to a central arrangement confirms the original Gothic church typology.

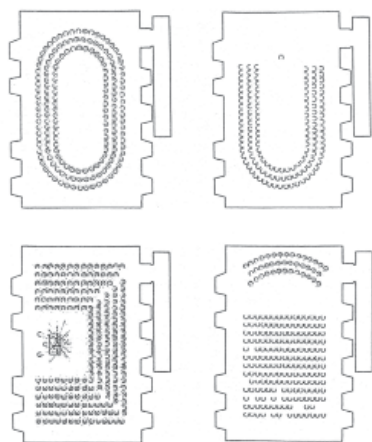


Fig. 06-07. Rudolf Schwarz, *Rittersaal*, Rothenfels (Germany), 1930; different forms of gathering.

the idea of discontinuity or a sudden break within history, but also highlight an interesting and creative period of time. In the next paragraphs we will discern three characteristics of the conciliar liturgical renewal, situating these in the Liturgical Movement and at the same time show how these ideas were both formed and fostered through liturgical space and architecture (Fig. 03-05).

### *The Active Participation of the Community*

When instituting the liturgical reforms, the Council declared that the «full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else» (SC §14).<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the council fathers wished that all the faithful «when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred action conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration» (SC §48). One can observe an evolution from the people seen as attending the liturgy to the people participating in the liturgy. According to the council fathers, the people present in church are not just spectators of a holy ritual performed by the priest, but acting subjects celebrating the Eucharist as a community.

This was already the desire of the founding father of the Liturgical Movement, Dom Lambert Beauduin (1873-1960). Beauduin was a Benedictine monk of the Mont-César abbey in Leuven, Belgium. In 1909 he gave a speech which marks the beginning of the Liturgical Movement and in which he pleads for «the active participation of the faithful in the liturgy of the Church» (Beauduin 2010, 38).<sup>5</sup> After Beauduin, this idea of the active participation of the entire community was developed by many theologians in the first half of the 20th century and became the leitmotif of the Liturgical Movement. It is strongly connected with new ecclesiological insights, in which the community model came to the fore and the church, both priests and lay-people, was seen as the body of Christ, as described by Saint Paul in his letter to the Corinthians (1Cor 12). This resulted in a deeper theological reflection on the role of the people during the liturgy, the universal priesthood, the relation between Church, community and Eucharist, but also in a lot of practical interventions. The missal was translated, published and spread to be used as a book of prayer during the liturgy, the so-called *missal-of the people*. Already decades before Vatican II started, courses and liturgical trainings were organized to introduce people – also lay-people – into the liturgy,

in some churches they experimented with the *Missa dialogata* or dialogue mass: people participating in the Latin dialogues (which was normally only done by the acolyte), people were encouraged to receive communion when they celebrated (which was not at all the case in those times) there was more attention to church music and communal singing, etc. All of this pertained to the practical efforts of letting people actively participate in the liturgy, which of course also received spatial expression.

Romano Guardini (1885-1968) and Rudolf Schwarz (1897-1961) designed the liturgical spaces in Burg-Rothenfels. The first was one of the leading figures of the Liturgical Movement in Germany and even beyond. His book *Vom Geist der Liturgie* (1918) remains one of the most influential works in Christian liturgy and theology until today and heavily inspired people like Joseph Ratzinger, the later pope Benedict XVI.<sup>6</sup> During the interbellum, from 1924 to 1939, Schwarz was Burgarchitect and Guardini Burgleiter of Burg-Rothenfels, a 12th century castle used by the Quickborn movement, a catholic youth movement which aimed at the cultural and intellectual development of German, mainly elite, young people (Debuyst 2008; Grafe 1997). Together, Guardini and Schwarz restyled the entire castle of Rothenfels, but mostly the Hall of the Knights (*Rittersaal*) and the chapel must be mentioned here. The Hall is not a liturgical space, but used for both lectures, cultural performance, liturgy, and all kind of gatherings (Debuyst 1997). In its essence, it was an empty space, characterized by what Schwarz called «a holy poverty», and his experience with this space in Rothenfels influenced all his later work (Bekaert 1967). The Hall did not have an altar, but for the liturgy a moveable table was brought in and different arrangements were possible, with the priest, Guardini in most cases, standing behind the altar-table, facing the people who were gathered around it and allowing them to actively participate (Fig. 06-07). This new liturgical and architectural arrangement also came to expression in the chapel (Debuyst 2008). Although the altar – also designed by Schwarz – was still attached to the wall, the sides were free and the students gathered in a semi-circle around it, creating

a *circumstantes* position of the community rather unknown in the tridentine rite. This arrangement, the *open ring*, is one of the plans Schwarz discusses in his book *The Church Incarnate* (1958). Although the ring is the most pure and elemental form according to Schwarz, liturgically the open ring seems to prevail, also in his other plans (Fig. 08). Rothenfels functioned as an experimental ground for the ideas of the Liturgical Movement and influenced a whole generation (Debuyst 2008).

### *The Rediscovery of the Bible*

A second important liturgical reform of Vatican II is the rediscovery of the bible and the important status of the Word of God in the liturgy. When the council describes how Christ is present in the liturgy, this divine presence is not exclusively tied up to the Eucharistic gifts. SC states that Christ is also present in the sacraments, in the community and «He [Christ] is present in His word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church» (SC §7). Consequently, the council fathers urge that in the liturgy «[t]he treasures of the bible are to be opened up more lavishly», more attention should be given to the liturgy of the word (SC §56) and there is even an plea, though until today not much heard or followed, to organize celebrations of the Word (*sacra Verbi Dei celebration*) (SC §34,4). However, also this element of renewal, the rediscovery of the bible, was already fervently advocated during the Liturgical Movement. Ambrosius Verheul (1916-2005), another Benedictine monk, in his widespread introduction to the liturgy, argued that the liturgical renewal should be preceded by a biblical renewal (Verheul 1961). However, the greatest advocate of the biblical-liturgical renewal was the Austrian theologian and Augustinian monk Pius Parsch (1884-1954). He was strongly convinced that the people should become much more familiar with Scripture, and that this should go hand in hand with liturgical renewal. He advocated bible sermons, instead of the more common moral and dogmatic sermons of his ages, and also attached high value to the liturgical sermon, which was not at all habitual for the liturgy as celebrated in the period before

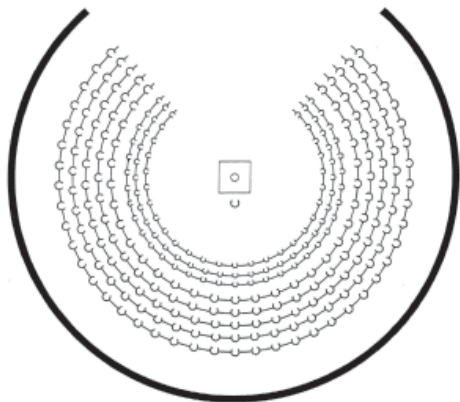


Fig. 08. Rudolf Schwarz, *The open ring*, 1938.

Vatican II. Apart from his many publications on the subject and the foundation of the quarterly journal *Bibel und Liturgie*, he also organized bible courses (*Bibelstunden*) where priests, religious but also lay-people discussed on and prayed with the biblical texts (Höslinger and Maas-Ewerd 1979). As such, the Liturgical Movement sought to give Gods Word a new liturgical *place*.

In the immense Baroque Benedictine Abbey of Melk, there is a small chapel, rearranged in 1966 by the Austrian architect Ottokar Uhl (1931-2011) (Debuyst 1997). Here, we see the reappearance of the circle and the kind of noble simplicity, equally noticeable in the work of Schwarz. Truly remarkable in this chapel is how the two parts of the liturgy, the Word and the Eucharist, receive their own *place* in its arrangement. The liturgy of the Word takes place on one side of the chapel, with the students sitting on the benches facing the ambo. For the offertory, all come to the front and stand around the altar (*circumstantes*) to celebrate the Eucharist. As such, the space creates its own liturgical choreography (Fig. 09-10). Not only do the readings receive full attention as Gods Word being spoken to the present community, also the (rather large) table of the Eucharist receives a

prominent and central position during the celebration of the mass, which brings us to the last characteristic.

### *The Eucharist as a Meal*

Today, considering the Eucharist as supper and taking into account the meal-character of it is self-evident. However, as the Jesuit scholar Josef Jungmann (1889-1975) —also an adherent of the Liturgical Movement— showed, this is truly a 20th century rediscovery, while before there was almost an exclusive stress on the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist (Jungmann 1951). This rediscovery can be considered a third landmark of the conciliar liturgical reform, when after the sixties the altar moved into the direction of the crossing or the nave of the church building and was reshaped more and more as a table. In view of active participation and the meal-dimension, all the faithful were urged to receive communion (SC §55), which was not at all the case before the council. On the Eucharist as a meal, the council not only referred to the last supper (SC §47) but also stressed that all the faithful «should be instructed by God’s word and be nourished at the table of the Lord’s body» (SC §48).<sup>7</sup> Again, it was due to the study and writings of theologians belonging to the Liturgical Movement that this meal-character became one of the leading ideas of the conciliar reform. Not only Jungmann played an indispensable role, but even before his groundbreaking study on the Eucharist, it was Guardini who hinted at this meaning of the Eucharistic meal. In his *Meditations before the Mass*, he writes two chapters on the altar: the altar as a threshold and the altar as a table (Guardini [1939] 1947). On the one hand, the altar is a spatial symbol of both a borderline and a passing over, on the other hand it is a table «to which the heavenly Father invites us. (...) At the altar we enjoy the intimate community of His sacred table» (Guardini [1939] 1947, 85).<sup>8</sup> This last idea, of the altar as a table and the Eucharist as a divine meal in which the faithful share, is taken up by others, who develop this not only from a theological, but also from a historical and anthropological perspective. In this respect, the writings of the French Oratorian Louis Bouyer (1913-2004) should be mentioned. In

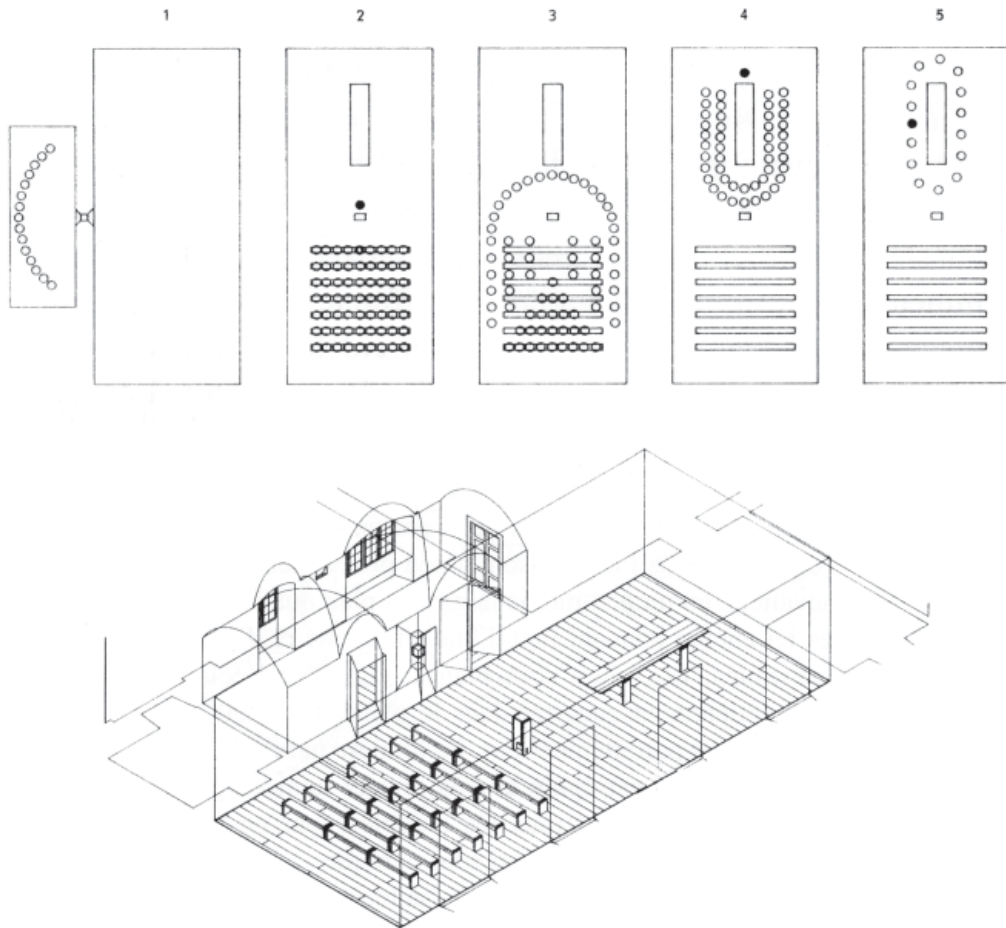
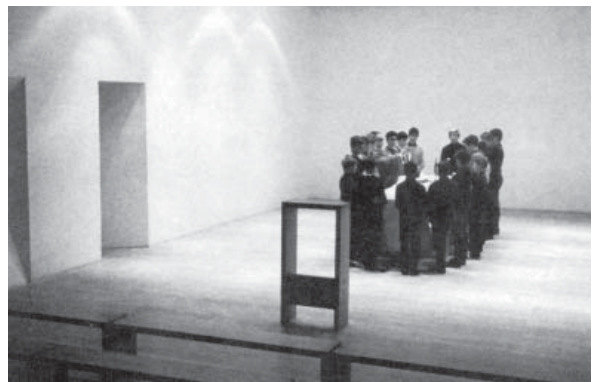
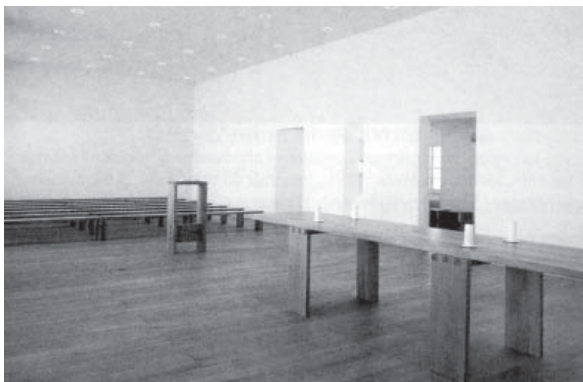


Fig. 09-10. Ottokar Uhl, Student chapel, Abbey of Melk (Austria), 1966; 1. Adoration; 2. Liturgy of the Word; 3. Offertory; 4. Eucharist (large group); 5. Eucharist (small group). A spatial choreography for the liturgy.





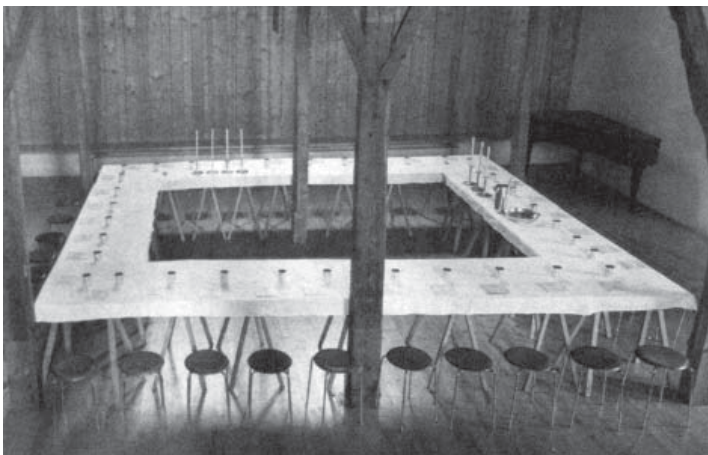
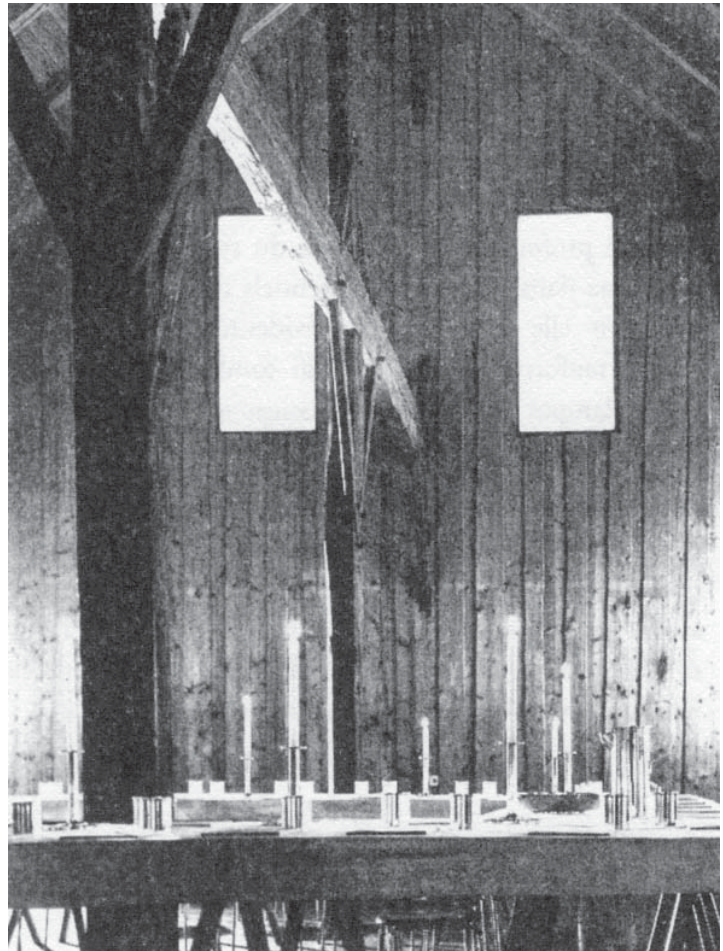


Fig. 11-12. Franz-Xaver Lutz, Liturgical Center, Rattenbach (Germany), 1979; with the liturgical concept by Aloys Goergen (Goergen was a student at Rothenfels and assistant of Guardini in Berlin). The table for the Eucharist on the first floor.

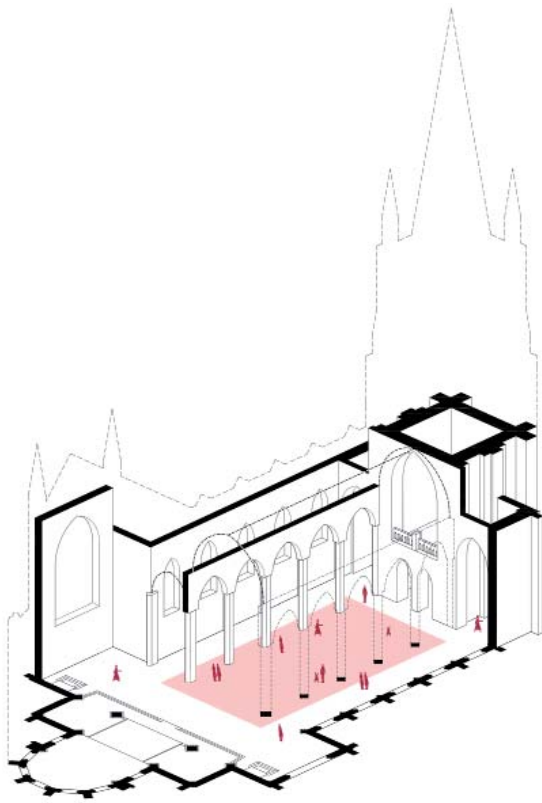


Fig. 13. Magdalena Church, Bruges (Belgium); the agora space in the nave for various socio-cultural activities.

his book *Liturgical Piety* (1954), he points to the Eucharist understood as a meal by reconnecting it to its Jewish origins, where (certain) meals were also held using a complex and well worked-out liturgy. It are the intuitions of a thinker like Guardini and the historical and theological groundwork of people like Bouyer, which lead to the practical liturgical reforms like the place of the altar and regular communion already mentioned (Fig. 11-12).

Moving the altar away from the choir wall and closer to the faithful is probably one of the most prominent features of post-conciliar church arrangement. This was the case in the examples of Rothenfels and Melk, but many other churches built

in the fifties already introduced a *free-standing* altar, as several of the plans and pictures above show. Of course, it is not just the position of the altar that changes but in many of these early cases, the position of the community gathered around it is also affected. The liturgical insights of Guardini and his contemporaries of the Liturgical Movement, on the liturgy as the communal act of the people, gathered around the Word of God and sharing in the body of Christ, did not just receive a spatial expression in the work of Schwarz, Uhl and many others but without a doubt theology itself was also inspired by the creative minds of these architects. As such, this period created room for interpretation and can in its turn inspire a contemporary case of adaptive reuse.

#### ADAPTIVE REUSE OF THE MAGDALENA CHURCH

The rearrangement of the Magdalena church aims to allow a more diverse use of the building, to strengthen the spiritual and liturgical experience of the community at large and to introduce a relationship between the church and the Astrid Park in the back.

In the Gothic concept of a church building, the nave functioned as a more public space while the choir was a more sacred space with limited access. This is reflected in various historical paintings of church interiors that portray a public interior with a more diverse use: instead of chairs, services at individual altars are shown, people praying in front of statues of saints, beggars, children playing, the presence of dogs, etc. (Baisier et al. 2016). We consider this originally hybrid character of the church interior to be a quality and try to re-apply it in this project in the sense that the nave of the Magdalena church would function as an agora that invites for a wide variety of activities to take place (e.g. exhibition, concert, social gathering, etc.), while the liturgical space becomes concentrated in and around the choir (Fig. 13).

The re-arrangement of the liturgical space applies the characteristics of modern liturgy developed in the context of Vatican II and the Liturgical Movement as described above. It also attempts to take these

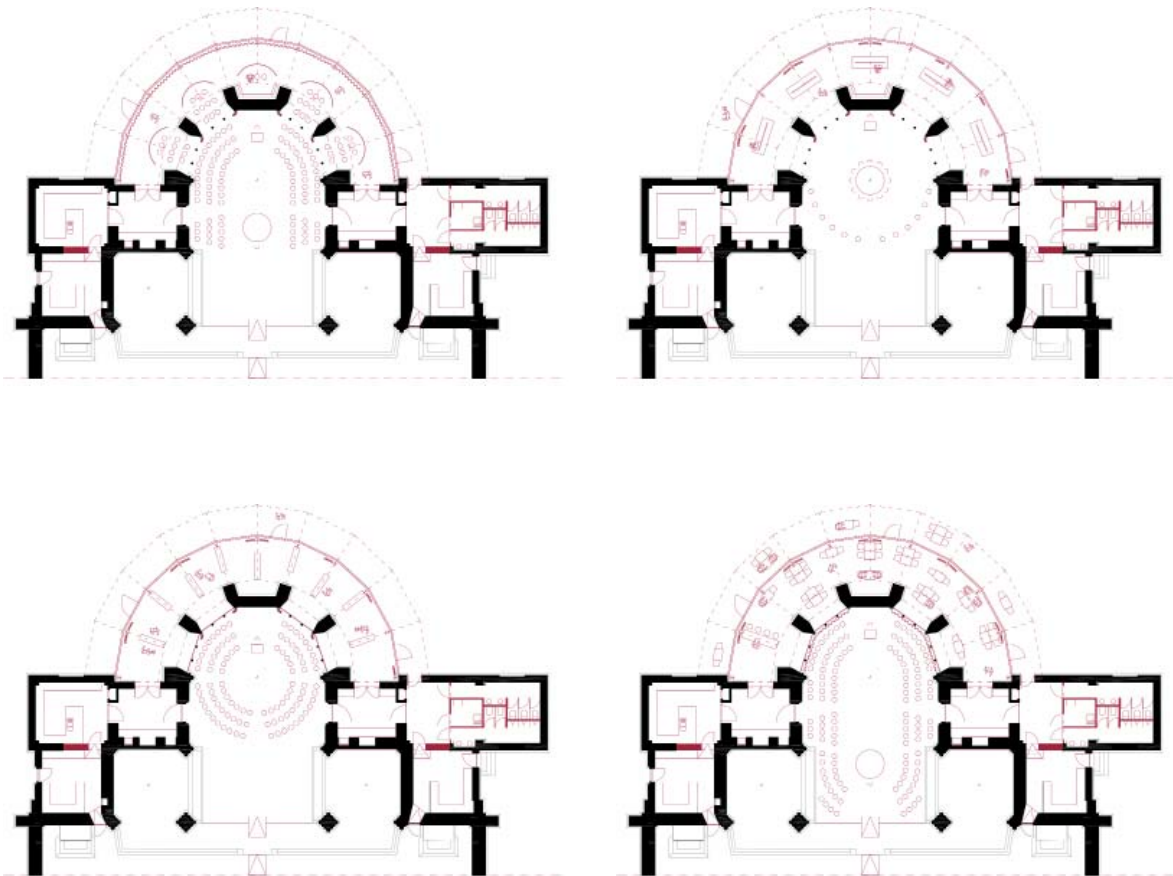


Fig. 14. Magdalena Church, Bruges (Belgium). Extension: the choir and ambulatory are combined as a liturgical space. The community takes a semi-circular position in the choir, the ambo positioned in the sanctuary, the altar centrally positioned in the choir, with the priest ad orientem though in the center of and facing the community. The ambulatory, as the extension of the liturgical space, allows to follow the service as an observer rather than an active participant and literally to keep some distance. The ambulatory thus becomes a kind of concentric figure. Curtains block the view towards the park and create a more intimate liturgical space. The backside of the sanctuary may function as a sort of 'chapel' for personal prayer or devotion.

Fig. 15. Silent Space; a small community is positioned in the choir facing the ambo in the sanctuary during the liturgy of the Word, and standing around the altar for the Eucharist. The ambulatory is furnished with benches and used as a silent space, in extension of the liturgical space in the choir.

Fig. 16. Exhibition; the community is positioned in the choir in concentric circles for celebrations of the Word. The ambulatory is used as an exhibition space, which can function independently from the liturgical space. Glass doors allow a visible connection between liturgical and exhibition space.

Fig. 17. Café; the community is positioned in the form of an ellipse with altar and ambo as foci; the ambo is positioned in the sanctuary, the altar closer to the crossing, with the priest ad orientem though in the center of the community. The ambulatory is used as a place for gathering after service. Doors and curtains separate the ambulatory from the choir. The café can be extended to the surrounding park.

a step further through an extension of the building in the form of an ambulatory. The typology of the ambulatory, a circular aisle surrounding the choir, was initially introduced in Romanesque church architecture but became more prominent in the Gothic style, emerging in the 12th century and instigated by abbot Suger (1081-1151) with the transformation of the church of Saint-Denis in Paris (Panofsky and Panofsky-Soergel 1979). The ambulatory was mainly intended to allow pilgrims to circulate in and around the church and was sometimes extended with apse chapels for the worship of relics (Woods 2013). In the Magdalena church, the proposed new ambulatory is a lower space connected with the choir through new openings in the arches of the sanctuary, following the existing rib structure. It is separated from the park with a glass façade. Through a system of curtains or panels, the ambulatory can also be separated from the choir or garden. This allows using it in different ways: as an extension of the liturgical core, in connection with the surrounding park, or as an individual space (Fig. 14-17). As such, the new ambulatory also takes up and reinforces the figure of *the open ring*, which is so important in the architectural liturgical ideas of Schwarz.

In this plan, too, the people stand in a ring about the altar, again the sheltering dome arches over both of them and again the priest stands at the altar as the representative of the congregation. He looks out to the east, into the openness, for it is there that the space opens: the people step back freeing one sector, the vault gapes in a tremendous window. Resplendent emptiness reaches in to the altar. Thus this altar, too, belongs to the congregation for it stands in their very center; but it is exactly at this point that the interrupting gap begins, at the heart of the people's space. Thus the altar is both apex and threshold, the center and the place of transition. This gap is itself radiant with light since the whole room has only this one window; but the gap is impenetrable for this window is vista, not gateway – that part of the world which we may tread ends at the altar (Schwarz 1958, 68).

The proposed lay-out of the space accepts and acknowledges the heterogeneity of both society and contemporary church communities. When the ambu-

latory and choir are connected, the more active faithful can sit within the choir, while people who wish to attend a service as observer rather than active participant can sit in the ambulatory and literally keep some distance (Fig. 14). Hence, a more open community is invited which may include faithful with other religious or cultural backgrounds, people looking for spirituality without engaging in a particular religion, tourists, etc. The ambulatory separated from or open to the choir can be used as a circulation space that allows walking around the entire church without disturbing an ongoing service. It can also contain other functions that vary in interaction with the religious service taking place in the choir. Eventually, the ambulatory may also be used partly as a chapel for individual prayer, worship or devotion (Fig. 15).

As all church furniture —individual chairs, altar and ambo— is movable, also the choir space can be used in various ways. This allows rearranging the space according to the type of service. For celebrations of the Word, the ambo can take a more central position while the altar can be moved to the side (Fig. 16). Particular arrangements may allow a more dynamic service with the community changing position during the service as shown before in the student chapel, Abbey of Melk (Fig. 09) – moving from its position around or directed to the ambo, towards standing around the altar (Fig. 15). As an extension of the liturgical gathering around Word and or Eucharist, the community can meet and have a drink after the service in the ambulatory or the nave of the church (Fig. 17).

Beside a programmatic impact, the introduction of an ambulatory also significantly alters the spatial characteristics and meaning of the space. The one-story high ambulatory introduces a more human scale in the monumental church. This is strengthened through the incidence of natural light and a possible see through at ground floor level. The view from the church interior towards the surrounding park and vice versa reinforces the sense of a more open community (Fig. 18).



Fig. 18. Magdalena Church and Astrid Park, Bruges (Belgium); the ambulatory activates the 19th century park and follows its formal language: undulating paths, circular kiosk and children's playground.

## CONCLUSION

What then comes into being is first and foremost circumscribed space - shelter, living space, ceremonial space, a space which replaces the space of the world. We could almost say, and indeed it is true, that building is based on the inner spaciousness of the body, on the knowledge of its extent and the form of its growth, on the knowledge of its articulation and of its power to expand. Indeed it is with the body that we experience building, with the outstretched arms and the pacing feet, with the roving glance and with the ear, and above

all else in breathing. Space is dancingly experienced. But the surroundings are the inversion of the dance: that space inside of which the dance extends itself, that space which stands ready for the body, is not, as is usually assumed, the outward radiating of the body but rather its inverted space – the body's space turned inside out and projected into the outer world. The body's space, however, forces itself outward whereas the space of the building forces itself inward so that its *skin* lies close to that of the dancing people. The *inside* of the structure overflows, the content of the space is larger than its *skin* (Schwarz 1938, 27).

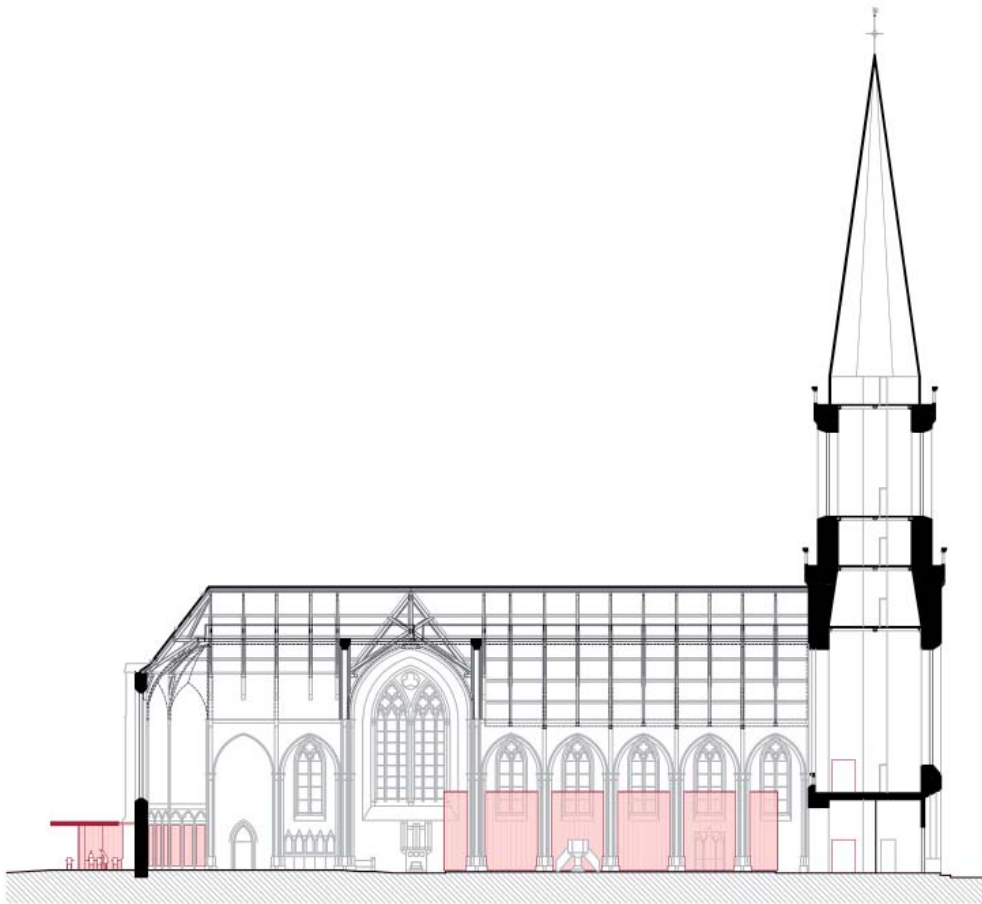


Fig. 19. Magdalena Church, Bruges (Belgium); longitudinal section with the indication of the agora in the nave (emphasized by a curtain) and the liturgical space in and around the choir.

With the case of the Magdalena Church in Bruges, we hope to prove the potential of adaptive reuse of churches as a sustainable transformation that can generate renewal of its spiritual character rather than the extinction of it. The definition of the agora and the extension with the ambulatory add new layers while maintaining a delicate balance of historical characteristics with existing spatial conditions and a modern approach of church architecture and liturgy (Fig. 19). The experiments

developed out of the Liturgical Movement and Vatican II are pointing in the direction of a stronger commitment and connection within the community. The project for the Magdalena church elaborates these ideas and shows that with the introduction of additional functions it can widen and reinforce these qualities in a contemporary way. Inspired by the work and writings of Rudolf Schwarz this paper considers the reuse of churches as part of a continuous transformation of their spiritual role. Beyond

a homogeneous liturgical celebration, it develops the possibility for layered and more heterogeneous forms of celebration and encountering. The proposed architectural interventions ultimately allow various activities with different degrees of participation, while respecting the fundamental principles of Christian liturgy.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baisier, Claire. 2016. *Divine Interiors: Experience Churches in the Age of Rubens: Exhibition Guide*. Mayer van den Bergh Museum: Stad Antwerpen.
- Bekaert, Geert. 1967. *In een of ander huis: kerkbouw op een keerpunt*. Tielt/The Hague: Lannoo.
- Beauduin, Lambert. 2010. «La vraie prière de l'Église». *Questions Liturgiques/Studies in Liturgy* 91/1: 37-41.
- Buyer, Louis. 1954. *Liturgical Piety*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Debuyst, Frédéric. 1968. *Modern Architecture and Christian Celebration. Ecumenical Studies in Worship 18*. London: Lutterworth Press.
- Debuyst, Frédéric. 1997. *Le génie chrétien du lieu*. Paris: Cerf.
- Debuyst, Frédéric. 2008. *L'entrée en liturgie: Introduction à l'oeuvre liturgique de Romano Guardini*. Paris: Cerf.
- Grafe, Christoph. 1997. «Kale waarheid: Fysieke ervaring en essentie in de architectuur van Rudolf Schwarz». *OASE* 45/46: 3-27.
- Guardini, Romano. 1947 (1939). *Besinnung vor der Feier der Heiligen Messe*. Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald.
- Guardini, Romano. 2007 (1918). *Vom Geist der Liturgie*. Augsburg: Grünewald/Schöningh.
- Haquin, André. 2005. «The Liturgical Movement and Catholic Ritual Revision». In *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, edited by Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, 696-720. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Höslinger, Norbert and Theodor Maas-Ewerd. 1979. *Mit Sanfter Zahigkeit: Pius Parsch Und Die Biblisch-Liturgische Erneuerung. Schriften Des Pius-Parsch-Instituts Klosterneuburg, 4*. Klosterneuburg: Österreichisches Katholisches Bibelwerk.
- Jungmann, Joseph. 1951 (1949). *The Mass of the Roman rite: its Origins and Development (Missarum Sollemnia)*. Translated by Francis A. Brunner. New York: Benzinger.
- Morel, Anne-Françoise and Stephanie Van de Voorde. 2012. «Rethinking the Twentieth-Century Catholic Church in Belgium: the Inter-Relationship Between Liturgy and Architecture». *Architectural History* 55: 269-297.
- Panofsky, Erwin and Gerda Panofsky-Soergel. 1979. *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St. Denis and its Art Treasures*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Reid, Alcuin. 2016. «The Twentieth-Century Liturgical Movement». In *T&T Clark Companion to Liturgy*, edited by Alcuin Reid, 153-174. London/ New York: Bloomsbury.
- Schwarz, Rudolf. 1958. *The Church Incarnate: The Sacred Function of Christian Architecture*. Translated by Cynthia Harris. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company.
- Schnell, Hugo. 1973. *Der Kirchenbau des 20. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland*. München & Zürich: Schnell und Steiner.
- Vande Keere, Nikolaas, Regis Verplaetse, Saidja Heynickx, Jo Broekx, Marcella Schiepers, Bie Plevoets and Koenraad Van Cleempoel. 2019. *Heilige Magdalenakerk Brugge Ontwerpend haalbaarheidsonderzoek nav de transformatie van de Heilige Magdalenakerk voor herwaardering*. Report of a commissioned research by design project concerning the Magdalena church, Bruges (Belgium).
- Verheul, Ambrosius. 1961. *Inleiding tot de liturgie: haar theologische achtergrond*. Antwerpen: Patmos.
- Woods, Kim W. 2013. *Art & Visual Culture 1100-1600: Medieval to Renaissance*. Milbank: Tate Enterprises Ltd.

## NOTES

1. Architect Rudolf Schwarz (1905-94) is a central figure in the reconstruction of Germany after WWII, especially with the design and remodeling of churches in the Rhineland and beyond. In 1938 he wrote *Vom Bau der Kirche*. The book contains many of the ideas that would come to define his oeuvre and the liturgical reform that led to Vatican II. Several fragments (including the title of this paper) and drawings are used here to invoke the spirit of the time and to resonate with the discourse we would like to develop. The fragments are taken from the English version of the book, published in 1958.

2. The team TRACE, of which Nikolaas Vande Keere and Bie Plevoets are part, is responsible for designing this project. The research program is organized by the Team Flemish Government Architect with the Agency Immovable Heritage and the Centre for Religious Art and Culture, between 2016 and 2019.

3. Elsewhere Nikolaas Vande Keere and Bie Plevoets elaborate on the underlying concept and principles of the Gothic Revival style and its potential to influence the adaptive reuse of churches from that period (Vande Keere and Plevoets 2018).

4. SC stands for *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the doctrinal document of Vatican II on the liturgy. All quotes are taken from the English version of the document as can be found on the website of the Vatican ([www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)).

5. Actually, Beauduin refers to Pius X who coined the expression *active participation* in his *motu proprio Tra le sollecitudini* of 1903.

6. In 2000, Ratzinger wrote a book on the liturgy himself, bearing almost the same title (*Der Geist der Liturgie*), as a tribute to Guardini, so he explains in the introduction.

7. You can see here a clear balance between what is called, *the table of the Word* (cf. our previous point), and *the table of the Eucharist*.

8. Compare also what Schwarz writes about the table in the quote above.

## SOURCE OF IMAGES

Fig. 01-02, 13-19. Vande Keere et al. 2019

Fig. 03, 05. Bekaert 1967.

Fig. 04. Schnell 1973.

Fig. 06-07, 10-12. Debuyst 1997.

Fig. 08. Schwarz 1958.