

THE MODERN CATHOLIC ARCHITECTURE OF POST-WAR GERMANY: Rudolf Schwarz, Dominikus Böhm and other German architects

Modern German Churches, Germany, Rudolf Schwarz, Dominikus Böhm, Architecture and Liturgy

/Abstract

Germany was one of the countries that suffered the most from the devastation wrought by wars, particularly the Second World War, which caused extensive destruction within the country. Among the edifices designated for public use were the churches. These buildings needed to be rebuilt, as they had a specific objective in the post-war era: to provide social and pastoral assistance to communities that had suffered destruction. Consequently, a significant reconstruction movement emerged, primarily in the Rhineland region, spearheaded by renowned architects Rudolf Schwarz and Dominikus Böhm, who were instrumental in shaping German Catholic architecture. The careers of Schwarz and Böhm commenced during the interwar period, a time when the Liturgical Movement and the Modern Movement were already influencing German Catholic architecture. Their work on the first churches considered modern in Germany represents a significant contribution to this evolving field. They facilitated its advancement following the Second World War, exerting an influence on other architects. The objective of this article is to provide a concise overview of the evolution of German Catholic architecture, with a particular focus on developments in the period following the Second World War. To this end, a comprehensive review of the relevant literature has been conducted. This article introduces the development of German Catholic architecture, which underwent a significant period of growth and improvement in a relatively short period. The skills of architects were enhanced, and the architectural style was disseminated not only throughout the country but also to other parts of the world.

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<https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/18484>

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Introduction

Germany was one of the European countries that was most severely affected by the devastation of the Second World War¹. The country was devastated², with a considerable number of public and private edifices reduced to rubble³. Among the affected structures were the churches, which would now serve as pivotal elements in the provision of social and pastoral services to communities in the aftermath of the war.

The process of reconstruction commenced in the west, specifically in the Rhineland region, where the construction of several new churches was initiated in response to the extensive damage and destruction caused by the war. Furthermore, the region was confronted with an influx of migrants during the war and the post-war period, as well as the movement of refugees from the devastated regions to the east and the mass migration between the old city centre and the expanding outskirts.⁴

It is evident that the cities were more severely affected than the countryside. Indeed, almost all urban centres of a certain size were subjected to at least 50% demolition, with Cologne experiencing 70% destruction and Würzburg reaching 75%. In Berlin, the previous city was almost entirely obliterated, and two new cities were born from its ruins, to the east and west.⁵

While the ruins of parish and collegiate churches in the inner cities were largely unused, hundreds of community centres were constructed in the new large settlements to provide pastoral and social care to these still faceless agglomerations.⁶ For a period of time, spiritual leaders were permitted to attend the consecration of a church on a weekly basis. However, by the end of the 1960s, it became evident that the demand for such facilities had been met, as evidenced by the declining numbers of people attending church and the shrinking size of Sunday congregations.⁷

A bibliographical review will be employed to provide a concise overview of the evolution of German Catholic Architecture, commencing with the interwar

1 The Second World War caused more material destruction in Europe than the First. The damage seemed so severe that at the end of the war the impression was that a long period of time had been committed to the reconstruction of the affected countries, but instead, for various reasons, including the progress of modern technology, a period of economic expansion soon began which imposed major social transformations, faster and more profound in some countries than at any other time in their respective histories. (free translation) Leonardo Benevolo, *História da Arquitetura Moderna* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 2001), 647.

2 Günther Feuerstein, *New Directions in German Architecture* (London: Studio Vista, 1968), 11.

3 The reconstruction of Germany took place in very special circumstances, due to the huge amount of damage caused by the war, which was greater than in any other country: of the ten and a half million homes in West Germany, almost five million were damaged, of which 2,350,000 were completely destroyed. (free translation) Benevolo, *História da Arquitetura*, 684.

4 Edwin Heathcote, "Post-War Germany. A Church Meant for our own Time," in *Church Builders*, ed. Edwin Heathcote and Iona Spens (Chichester: A. D. Academy, 1997), 41.

5 Benevolo, *História da Arquitetura*, 684.

6 The exodus of people from the major centres was almost complete: Cologne, which had half a million inhabitants, was reduced to less than fifty thousand in 1945. In addition, it was estimated that ten million people moved from East Germany to West Germany, changing even the population distribution. (free translation) Benevolo, *História da Arquitetura*, 685.

7 Wolfgang Pehnt, "Under the Sign of Liturgical Reform," in *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock (Munich: Prestel, 2002), 155.

period and concluding with the post-Second World War era. During this latter period, two architects, Rudolf Schwarz and Dominikus Böhm, played a pivotal role in initiating a transformation in German Catholic Architecture.

Modern Catholic Architecture in Germany

New Churches

The new Catholic churches constructed at the beginning of the 20th century, in accordance with the principles espoused by the Liturgical Movement⁸, placed the assembly around the high altar at the centre of the design. This simplicity was characterised by the absence of ornamentation, with no elements that might distract the faithful from the proceedings at the high altar. The presbytery was not particularly elevated, and the high altar was situated in the centre, allowing for Mass to be held in *versus populum* when necessary. The advent of new building technologies enabled architects to design churches that were no longer constrained to the basilica form. Consequently, architects would be able to experiment with a wide variety of floor plans, including circular, elliptical, square, and trapezoidal designs. This approach diverges from traditional models and aligns with the tenets of simplicity, as espoused by the theorists of the Liturgical Movement and the architects of the Modern Movement.⁹

The modernisation of architecture and the renewal of the liturgy were two distinct but interrelated phenomena. Their convergence led to a strengthening of the arguments put forth by both movements. The principles of the Liturgical Movement found a strong correspondence in those of the Modern Movement, namely functionalism, purification, authenticity, rationalism and clarity. From this point onwards, religious architecture underwent a rethink and renovation, not only in response to the Church's needs but also in accordance with the aspirations of architects and artists themselves, who sought to imbue sacred spaces and places of worship with the modern spirit. This is exemplified by the Brazilian case of Oscar Niemeyer's Pampulha Chapel (1943), where the initiative to construct a modern church originated with the government and was not shared with the Church authorities during the development of the project. This

8 The Liturgical Movement was a process that took place in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, which began in Europe with the aim of recovering the true values of the liturgical life of the Christian community. The process matured at the beginning of the 20th century with the publication by Pope Pius X in 1903 of the *Motu proprio Tra le sollecitudini* (Among the cares) on sacred music. In it, the Pope made a surprising revelation and expressed a concern: that the faithful should find the true Christian spirit in its first and indispensable source, in active participation in the sacred mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the Church. In other words, the true Christian spirit should consist of active participation in the sacred mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the Church. From then on, it would grow especially after the World Wars.

9 Rogério Henrique Frazão Lima, *"Arquitetura das Igrejas e o Culto Católico Contemporâneo: Preservação e Adaptabilidade"* (Master diss., Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2011), 21.

resulted in the Church authorities rejecting the proposal for almost 15 years.¹⁰

The most significant impact of modern architecture on religious architecture occurred following the Second World War, with numerous reconstructions of churches destroyed by the attacks. Germany was one of the countries with the largest number of rebuilt churches. Rudolf Schwarz and Dominikus Böhm were two architects who made a significant contribution to this process.¹¹

A number of guidelines were produced with the intention of providing direction to architects, artists, clergy and laity on the manner in which the new churches should be realised. In Germany, during the reconstruction phase, the liturgical commission of the bishops' conference in Fulda commissioned the writing of *Guidelines for the Design of the House of God in the Spirit of the Roman Liturgy*, which were compiled in 1949 under the management of church historian Theodor Klauser.¹² The aforementioned guidelines were subsequently translated into Portuguese and published by the architect João de Almeida in the magazine *Novellae Olivarum* in 1955,¹³ with the following principles:

"A Christian church is a consecrated building filled with a special divine Presence - even apart from the Eucharist - where the People of God gather. The People of God gather here:

first and foremost, to celebrate the renewal of Christ's Sacrifice-Redeemer; secondly, to receive the fruits of Christ's Sacrifice-Redeemer in the holy sacraments;

thirdly, to hear the Word of God;

fourthly, to offer their homage to Christ, present in the Eucharistic Bread;

fifthly, to indulge in extra-liturgical devotions."¹⁴

The aforementioned definitions were to be translated into rules that the architect was obliged to fulfil, taking into account the following requirements for the people of God in modern times: "the imperious desire for community life; the yearning for truth and authenticity; the desire to move from the superficial to what is central and essential; the ambition for clarity, luminosity and visibility; the vehement yearning for silence and peace, for warmth and security", which had to be transformed into concrete consequences. As for the exterior, the guidelines

10 Marcus Marciano Gonçalves da Silveira, *Templos modernos, templos ao chão* (Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2011), 42.

11 Hugo Schnell, *Der Kirchenbau des 20. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland* (München: Verlag Schell & Steiner, 1973), 40-51.

12 The *Guidelines for the Design of the House of God in the Spirit of the Roman Liturgy* were officially promulgated by the Bishops' Conference in Fulda. This document was drafted by Dr Theodor Klauser of the University of Bonn, at the request and with the collaboration of the Liturgical Commission chaired by the bishops of Mainz and Passau, as liturgical rapporteurs of the Fulda Bishops' Conference, and was based on the responses received from all the bishops of Germany to a questionnaire sent to them in advance. The final version was only finalised in 1953, after numerous meetings of the Liturgical Commission.

13 The *Guidelines for the design of the house of God in the spirit of the Roman liturgy*, in Portuguese were published in the magazine *Novellae Olivarum*, ano XIII, no. 121, January 1955; reprinted in year XVI, no. 162 (July 1959). The magazine *Ora et Labora*, year II, no. 2 (1955) also published them.

14 João de Almeida, "Directivas para o projeto da casa de Deus no espírito da liturgia romana," *Novellae Olivarum*, year XIII, no. 121 (January 1955): 1.

stated that it should be: “as dignified as it is persuasive, the Transcendence, the Supernaturality, the Divinity of what goes on inside; and yet harmoniously fit the House of God into the environment.”¹⁵

Dominikus Böhm¹⁶ and Rudolf Schwarz: The precursors

The architects Dominikus Böhm (1880-1955) and Rudolf Schwarz (1897-1961)¹⁷ collaborated in a harmonious manner on the construction of the “new era” sacred building. Böhm, who joined the Kölner Werkschulen in 1926,¹⁸ completed one of his emblematic works in the early 1930s, the parish church of St. Engelbert (1930-1932),¹⁹ with its centralised flower-shaped plan, which is considered to be the first modern church in Cologne. The church is situated in the Riehl district, located in the northern part of the city. It occupies a considerable area, approximately half a city block. The church is constructed on a plateau and has a concrete structure with a circular plan, the outer walls of which are divided into eight segments. The church’s elevation comprises a ring of curved, parabolic walls, which are covered by barrel vaults. The exterior of the edifice is clad in brick. A rectangular annex was subsequently constructed to the main body of the church, with the intention of housing the presbytery. This annex is covered by a smaller parabolic vault and is illuminated by a large parabolic window on the side. The building, which exhibited a markedly different degree of plasticity for its era, earned it the sobriquet of “lemon squeezer”. Adjacent to the church is an autonomous square bell tower that serves as the baptistry. The interior of the church is characterised by smooth plastered walls and a diffused light source provided by the eight upper circular stained-glass windows. The presbytery, in contrast, is illuminated by a side window that provides a bright, concentrated light source. Dominikus Böhm is regarded as an architect who was able to successfully combine an understanding of the mysticism of light

15 Almeida “Directivas para o projeto”, 2-3.

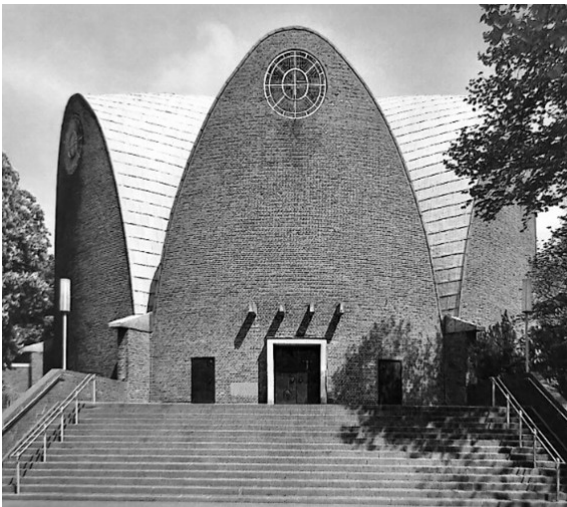
16 Dominikus Böhm (1880-1955) was a German architect who was born in Jettingen and died in Cologne aged 74. With more than 50 churches built, he is considered one of the most important names in European religious architecture, at the forefront of designing sacred spaces. He stands out for his use of exposed concrete and for rehumanising the floor plan by designing interiors in which the worshipper takes centre stage. Works in Germany, Brazil, Poland, El Salvador, Netherlands and the United States. He completed a technical course in construction, and dedicated himself to teaching from an early age, as a drawing teacher at the school where he studied. His first church was built in 1919 in the town of Offenbach. In 1926, the architect moved to Cologne, where he consolidated his career, much of it dedicated to the construction of religious buildings. His work developed in a more remarkable way from 1920 until the end of Second World War. It was a period in which architects reinvented themselves, causing a paradigm shift in architecture. And this is very characteristic of Böhm’s work, which made use of different materials and languages, reinterpreting tradition and letting go of sacred symbolism in architectural design.

17 Rudolf Schwarz (1897-1961) was a well-known German architect who realised several religious projects, including the Church of Corpus Christi, in Aachen. Schwarz was also director of the Aachen Arts and Crafts School from 1927 to 1934, and played a decisive role in the reconstruction of the city of Cologne after the Second World War, taking a leading role in the city’s reconstruction authority between 1947 and 1952, contributing some of his own designs. He was also responsible for rebuilding the pilgrimage church of St Anna in Düren, near Aachen, which is probably his most famous work.

18 Kölner Werkschulen (Cologne Academy of Fine and Applied Arts) was a university in the city of Cologne that trained artists, architects and designers from 1926 to 1971.

19 The design for St Englebert’s Church was the result of a competition limited to five architects, in which Böhm won. Several Church authorities opposed his proposal, as they thought the forms were closer to the Eastern spirit than the Western one. But the architect’s brilliant defence showed that his architecture was deeply associated with the new liturgy, ensuring that it was built with a volumetry never seen before, and that its interior was surprising in both liturgical and artistic terms. João Alves da Cunha, “O MRAR e os anos de ouro da *Arquitetura Religiosa em Portugal no século XX*” (Ph.D. diss., Faculdade de Arquitetura da Universidade de Lisboa, 2014), 52.

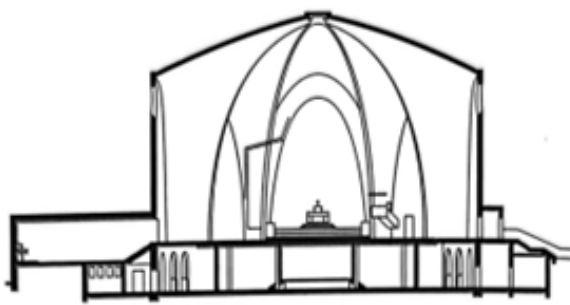
with his architectural expertise. He perceived light as a valuable construction material for the consecration of sacred space and as a material bestowed upon us by our Creator.²⁰



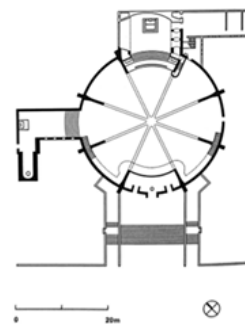
1a



1b



1c



1d

In his book *Church Builders*, Edwin Heathcote asserts that St. Engelbert is “one of the most influential buildings of its era,” and that Böhm “created a perfectly circular church; the first modern Catholic church freed from the tyranny of the rectangular plan.”²¹ Similarly, Wolfgang Jean Stock, in his book *European Church Architecture 1900-1950*, states that “St. Engelbert assured him (Böhm) a place in the annals of modern church architecture.”²² In his book *Arquitectura Religiosa Moderna*, the Portuguese architect Luiz Cunha also lauded the circular design of the church created by Böhm, stating that it is “undoubtedly the most beautiful circular church that modern architecture has produced.”²³

In contrast to the approach taken by Schwarz in the Corpus Christi Church

20 Peter Keller, *St. Engelbert in Cologne-Riehl* (Cologne: Rheinische Kunststätten, 1991), 12.

21 Erwin Heathcote, “The Twentieth-Century Church” in *Church Builders* ed. Edwin Heathcote and Iona Spens (Chichester: A. D. Academy, 1997), 27.

22 Wolfgang Jean Stock, *European Church Architecture 1900-1950* (Munich: Prestel, 2006), 140.

23 Luiz Cunha, *Arquitectura religiosa moderna* (Porto: Imprensa, 1957), 34.

Fig. 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d
Parish Church of St. Engelbert: exterior and interior, section and plant. Source: Wolfgang Jean Stock – *European Church Architecture 1900-1950*, p. 136-141.

(1929-1930), the architect created a high, free space accompanied by a single low side aisle. This approach broke with the rhetorical charge inherited from the past, cancelling out spatial separations and seeking to bring the faithful closer to the celebration. Nevertheless, the congregation was still arranged in accordance with the traditional processional layout, with the pulpit elevated in reference to the traditional longitudinal nave. The construction of the edifice was completed with the utilisation of a reinforced concrete framework, while the interior walls were finished with a plaster coating and a coating of bricks.²⁴ Schwarz's architectural approach was informed by a profound comprehension of the functional aspects of the built environment. The essential relationship with the liturgical programme was expressed in the geometric simplicity and formal simplicity of the interiors. These qualities enabled the space to contain and symbolise the periodic communal celebration of the Eucharist and the permanent divine presence, without the presence of any images.²⁵ The interior was characterised by a dark base, surrounded by white walls, which corresponded to a theological concept that the floor represented human existence on earth, while the walls evoked the ascent to heaven.²⁶

The structure, known as the "Factory", comprises a parallelepiped volume placed vertically (the body of the nave), perforated by openings that are also square and enclosed by slender frames with colourless glass placed on the outside of the surfaces. These are flanked asymmetrically by a smaller prism (side nave) with a dominant horizontal shape and a 40-metre-high square bell tower base. In his thesis on the MRAR, João Cunha said that "for the first time, a Catholic church adopted the parallelepiped expression associated with the industrial buildings erected by modern architecture in the previous decade."²⁷

The interior of the church comprises a main nave measuring 21 metres in height and a side nave of a much lower height, which contains a confessional, the Via Crucis and an intimate chapel. A notable contrast is evident between the two naves, with the main nave being markedly illuminated by natural light, in contrast to the side nave, which is not.²⁸ In his thesis, Cunha described the "liturgical programme" as having been "interpreted and materialised by a theological thought of a truly modern spirit."²⁹ For Schwarz, the white wall behind the altar was not merely a spatial conclusion; it was a "membrane" permeable to movement beyond the demarcated space.

Even today, the imposing white structure stands out starkly against the surrounding landscape. As Wolfgang Jean Stock observed, "this building made history. Like no other it is seen to this day as the quintessential work of Modernism

24 Flávia Martini Ramos, et al, *Templos Modernos: Estudos das Igrejas projetadas por Dominikus e Gottfried Böhm em SC* (Florianópolis: PET/ARQ/UFSC, 2013), 83.

25 Elisiário Miranda, "Arquitetura e Liturgia em Portugal (1926-1974)" (Provas de Aptidão Pedagógica e Capacidade Científica diss., Departamento Autónomo de Arquitectura da Universidade do Minho, 2005), 40.

26 Cunha, "O MRAR e os anos de ouro", 67.

27 Cunha, "O MRAR e os anos de ouro", 67.

28 Miranda, "Arquitetura e Liturgia em Portugal", 40-41.

29 Cunha, "O MRAR e os anos de ouro", 67.

in European ecclesiastic architecture."³⁰ For Luiz Cunha, "the value of the church in Aachen lies, therefore, not exactly in what it is, but above all in what it allows it to be, that is, in the perfect way in which it favours the transcendent mission that is asked of it."³¹ Furthermore, Nuno Portas classified it as "one of the best examples of European purism in its almost colourless, perfectly parallelepiped volumetry, which results in a dramatic intensity then despised by the very canons of rationalism."³²



The construction of both buildings prompted considerable debate within the Catholic Church, and both architects subsequently departed from the principles of pure and strict geometry in their subsequent architectural designs. These edifices, however, survived the Second World War and serve as a testament to the prevailing architectural ideology at the time.³³

Following the Second World War, Böhm and Schwarz continued their work. At the conclusion of the war, Böhm was 65 years of age and was widely regarded as the patriarch of Catholic church architecture in Germany. His post-war creations never attained the significance of his earlier works from the 1920s and

30 Stock, *European Church Architecture 1900-1950*, 124.

31 Cunha, *Arquitetura religiosa moderna*, 38.

32 Nuno Portas, "Sobre a situação da Arquitectura Religiosa no Mundo," *Arquitetura* no. 60, (October 1957): 22.

33 Pehnt, "Under the Sign of Liturgical Reform," in *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock, 155.

Fig. 2a, 2b, 2c
Corpus Christi Church:
exterior, interior and plant.
Source: Wolfgang Jean
Stock – *European Church
Architecture 1900-1950*,
p. 124-129.

1930s. Some of the buildings resembled traditional village churches, but the Church of Maria Königin (1952-1954) in Cologne, situated in proximity to the South Park, constituted a notable highlight.

The red brick edifice was augmented by a square bell tower base, which was added by his son Gottfried Böhm between 1959 and 1960. The baptistry, which is situated adjacent to the south wall of the church and is accessed via a transparent glass corridor near the choir, is a circular stained-glass structure. It contains a baptismal font, which was designed by Hanns Rheindorf.

The square church, designed to bring the parishioners closer to the altar, is an expression of the new liturgical requirements, with its steel structure and light four-sided roof, supported by four slender steel columns, exposed inside and painted in a bright scarlet colour, the only colour against the white walls and the only colour repetition of the bright fragments of stained glass.³⁴

The presbytery with the high altar is next to the west wall, where there is a slight curvature in the apse. To the south, the wall is entirely of stained glass and opens onto the South Park, revealing a serenity hitherto unknown to Böhm.

The stained-glass wall running the length of the nave is the highlight of the project and is probably one of the most beautiful post-war German churches. The pattern is a stylised leaf design executed in shades of silver grey. No other colours were used, except for fourteen small litany symbols³⁵ that break up the background pattern at irregular intervals. These accent dots are fragments of antique glass that glow yellow, green and red.³⁶

In addition to the coloured fragments, the wall is semi-transparent, allowing the outlines of the various large trees on the exterior to be discerned through the glass. The shadows cast by the trees on the glass create a silvery, shifting veil-like effect. On the north side of the church are the sacristy and other rooms, as well as a smaller chapel that is open to the interior of the church.³⁷

In this project, Böhm employed a minimalist approach, maintaining the structure's simplicity while leaving the surfaces unadorned to accentuate the expansive stained-glass wall³⁸. This was the genesis of an impressive architectural work of the post-war period in Germany, distinguished by its plasticity and profusion of detail. The final church designed by Dominikus Böhm was Church of Maria Königin.

In addition to his work in Europe, Dominikus Böhm collaborated with his son Gottfried on projects outside the continent. These included the construction

34 Albert Christ-Janer and Mary Mix Foley, "Church of Maria Königin," in *Modern Church Architecture: A Guide to the form and spirit of twentieth century religious buildings* (Florence: Literary Licensing, 1962), 58.

35 Litany is a form of prayer used especially in Catholic worship that consists of a series of prayers organised in short invocations that are alternately sung or said by a deacon, priest or cantors and to which the people respond in a fixed way, for example "pray for us", "we ask you, hear us". F. L. Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 984.

36 Christ-Janer and Foley, "Church of Maria Königin," in *Modern Church Architecture*, 56.

37 Pehnt, "Under the Sign of Liturgical Reform," in *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock, 157.

38 Christ-Janer and Foley, "Church of Maria Königin," in *Modern Church Architecture*, 55.

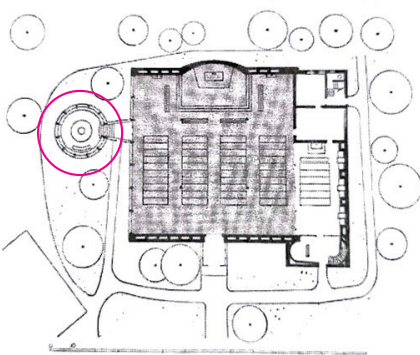
of two churches in Brazil: The Church of São Luís Gonzaga (1953-1962) in Brusque and the Church of São Paulo Apóstolo (1953-1963), now the Cathedral of Blumenau. The latter church exhibits similarities with the Church of Maria Königin project. For instance, the baptistery is constructed entirely of stained glass outside the walls of the church, in contrast to the Brazilian church where it is located in front of the main door, on the same axis as the high altar and under the same roof. Another point of similarity is the use of an entirely stained-glass wall, which in the Brazilian church is located on the main façade and on the side of the presbytery wall.



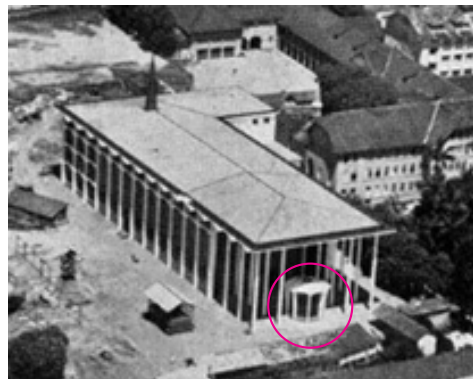
3a



3b



3c



3d

Following the completion of the Corpus Christi church in Aachen, Schwarz survived the Third Reich through the execution of smaller projects. However, he was also involved in the planning of large-scale regional developments in Lorraine. For Schwarz, the conclusion of the Second World War marked the advent of his most prolific and fruitful period as a church architect. The catalogue includes 24 new and rebuilt projects between 1945 and 1961, the year of his death. A further ten projects were completed posthumously under the direction of his wife, Maria Schwarz. It is notable that, with the exception of a few instances, his architectural designs offer expansive and refined spaces that do not cease at a specific point, but continue beyond the altar, providing an experience for the human gaze.

For Church of St. Michael (1952-1956) in Frankfurt, Schwarz devised a structure with an elliptical floor plan (51m x 17m), the nave of which is 16m high.

Fig. 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d
Church of Maria Königin: the first image left; the baptistery outside. The first image right; interior and the second image left; plant. Source: G E Kidder Smith – *The new churches of Europe*, p. 114-115. The second image on the right is the Cathedral of Blumenau, in Brazil, where it is possible to see the baptistery outside. Source: *Acrópole Magazine* – Igreja Matriz de Blumenau, p. 179.

The nave is massively framed by the structure's concrete pillars and illuminated by a continuous window that encircles the entire building just below the roof. From the ground to the aforementioned window, the walls are a solid expanse of brickwork, with the exception of the atriums (antechambers) at the front and the chapels situated behind the presbytery.³⁹

The architect's objective was to construct a robust and resilient edifice that would serve as a protective barrier against the challenges of the external environment. However, the expansive, exposed concrete structure and the substantial red brick walls gave way to a tranquil and aesthetically pleasing interior space, akin to a spiritual retreat, secure and tranquil. The walls are painted white with soft curves that contrast only with the pillars of the concrete structure that run from the floor to the roof, providing the only break in the internal surface. The pillars, which appear substantial on the exterior, appear delicate on the interior, where they have a slender edge that is flush with the wall. The walls are painted moss green, a colour that could be considered neutral. The floors are covered in dark grey slate, while the benches are constructed from wood in its natural state. The white walls and neutral tones are offset by the concrete roof, which is designed to resemble a large floating marquee and is painted sky blue with gold-coloured ribs.⁴⁰

The interior is illuminated by a soft light from the high glass block during the day. In contrast, the artificial lighting is provided by simple white elongated globes which fall on thin golden rods from the high ceiling to the low point inside the nave. The interior is devoid of any additional embellishments, such as stained glass or colourful decorations. Instead, it is characterised by a minimalist aesthetic, with the walls, pillars and roof all painted white, and the latter featuring a blue hue. The result is consistent with the scriptures, which state that "peace that surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7) can be attained.

The subsidiary elements (antechambers and chapels) project outward, creating an uninterrupted interior space surrounded by a continuous, gently curved wall. Concurrently, the geometrically coupled side chapels are integrated into this uninterrupted space, in contrast to the antechambers at the entrance, which have considerably lower ceilings and are separated from the interior, akin to distinct rooms.

Each of these chapels was designed for a specific purpose. The chapel on the right was occupied by the choir, while the chapel on the left contains the confessionals and stations of the Via Crucis. The chapel also serves as a secondary nave, providing a more intimate setting for weekday services when the church is not at full capacity. This configuration allows for direct communion between the officiating priest at the central altar and a smaller body of faithful in the smaller chapel. On Sundays and holy days, a larger congregation fills the

39 Albert Christ-Janer and Mary Mix Foley, "Church of St. Michael," in *Modern Church Architecture: A Guide to the form and spirit of twentieth century religious buildings* (Florence: Literary Licensing, 1962), 67.

40 Christ-Janer and Foley, "Church of St. Michael," in *Modern Church Architecture*, 67.

main nave, with overflow seating available in this chapel. The choir's location in the chapel to the right, with a view of the presbytery, also establishes an intimate relationship between this group and the altar. Furthermore, the choir was situated at the same level as the congregation, thereby becoming integrated into it. The altar is square in shape⁴¹ and is positioned in such a way that the priest can stand on any of its four sides. This allows the priest to face the small daily congregation, the choir, or the main nave, depending on the occasion. The altar is situated behind a semicircular apse, which contains the seats for the priest and his assistants. These seats are constructed from grey slate, matching the floor.⁴²

Although the nave of this church is long and narrow, reminiscent of traditional basilica plans, it still achieves a sense of unity between the priest and the congregation due to its extreme simplicity and its single curve that encloses the congregation and the altar in a single space. The absence of side aisles, columns, or other superfluous architectural elements serves to accentuate the



infinite expanse of this elongated, elevated space.

On the same axis as the high altar is the baptismal font,⁴³ situated in close proximity to the entrance doors. The location of this font evokes the Parish Church of Santo Antonio in Moscavide (1955-1956), situated in the vicinity of Lisbon. The architectural design by A. de Freitas Leal and João Almeida places the baptismal font on the same axis as the high altar and adjacent to the main entrance.⁴⁴ It is possible that German religious architecture exerted some influence on Portuguese architecture. In this same church, the architects employed a squarer plan for the church, with three sides occupied by the assembly, situated in closer proximity to the altar. This type of plan is often observed in German architectural designs.

The bell tower, which is of considerable height and has a circular base, was

41 The placement of the altar as the centre of the four sides symbolised "the four corners of the earth" and was a sign of universal blessing. Christ-Janer and Foley, "Church of St. Michael," in *Modern Church Architecture*, 68.

42 Christ-Janer and Foley, "Church of St. Michael," in *Modern Church Architecture*, 67.

43 The position of the baptismal font is symbolic. In a straight line with the altar and between the two entrance doors, it represents entry into the Church, leading to the sacrament of communion and therefore the promise of salvation, as described in the Roman missal.

44 ⁿuno Portas, "Moscavide Igreja Paroquial de S. António", *Arquitectura* no. 60 (October 1957): 24-30.

Fig. 4a, 4b, 4c
Church of St. Michael
(1952-1956) – Frankfurt:
interior, exterior and plant.
Source: Wolfgang, Jean
Stock – *European Church
Architecture 1950-2000*, p.
40-41.

erected at a later date and was designed by Karl Wimmenauer. It has a marked impact on the surrounding landscape. At the time of its construction, the church was visible from all sides. However, its striking form is now largely hidden by trees and bushes. Schwarz's audacity in designing this edifice is acknowledged by himself. "Its entire form so strongly determined by its building method that one has to become acquainted with this in order to understand the building."⁴⁵

In this project, the architect used what he called the "open ring". His main idea was to place the congregation around the three sides of the altar like a ring, with the fourth side of the ring being the curved apse, where the celebrants of the service are present. Symbolically, this model was intended to express that everyone was directed towards the altar with its "mediator" or "threshold", with the apse signifying the opening of heaven.⁴⁶ In Portugal, the Church of São João de Deus (1947-1953), designed by architect António Lino, despite having its characteristics orientated towards traditional architecture, has its nave divided into three, all of the same height and size, facing the high altar, with a similar objective to the one used by Schwarz.

After designing Church of St. Michael, Schwarz developed a repertoire of curved, elliptical and parabola geometries, as well as rectangular rooms, halls and basilicas, and cruciform or T-shaped plans.⁴⁷ Two examples are the St Ludgero Church (1959-1963) in Wuppertal-Vohwinkel and the St Boniface Church (1959-1964) in Wetzlar,⁴⁸ where Schwarz, who had little regard for Le Corbusier's Ronchamp Chapel, created almost floating spaces.⁴⁹ In Portugal, an architect who also explored a geometric repertoire was Luiz Cunha.

In the case of both Böhm and Schwarz, the wall surfaces of these creations are no longer kept in an abstract white. The wall surfaces were adapted to the textures and colours of the materials, the grain and tone of the stonework, brick or exposed concrete. These projects permitted extensive collaboration with visual artists. The purist box is no longer defined by a few exquisite details, such as a narrow crucifix, a circular baptismal font, or the ascetic liturgical device. The vitality that even the austerity of the war and the post-war period failed to diminish in the artists of the Rhine region experienced a renaissance in the work of Schwarz and, in particular, Böhm.⁵⁰

45 Rudolf Schwarz, "St. Michael Frankfurt am Main", in *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock (Munich: Prestel, 2002), 39.

46 Christ-Janer and Foley, "Church of St. Michael," in *Modern Church Architecture*, 68.

47 Rudolf Schwarz was a prominent Roman Catholic architect who had studied theology and was closely involved in the liturgical reform movement. His churches were designed largely as contemplative spaces, in which the congregation would have a clear sense of presence before God. Tending towards minimalism of form, but with multivalent symbolism that contributed to the fullness of meaning; Schwarz devised a system of seven church plans, each of which had a wealth of symbolic association and he designed each of his churches with specific symbolic reference. Which was later published as a book. While Roman Catholic worship had long been held in the longitudinal "Wegkirche" (procession church), Schwarz favoured the "Ringkirche" (ring church) in which the congregation with the priest was gathered around the altar.

48 These churches were completed after Schwarz's death, under the command of his wife Maria.

49 Pehnt, "Under the Sign of Liturgical Reform," in *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock, 157.

50 Pehnt, "Under the Sign of Liturgical Reform," in *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock, 157.

Fig. 5a, 5b
St. Rochus - Düsseldorf:
exterior and plant. Source:
europeana.eu.scheider-
esleben_paul.

In addition to his architectural legacy, Rudolf Schwarz exerted considerable influence through his writings, which employed a distinctive pictorial diction that was highly suggestive. The first edition of his book *Vom Bau der Kirche* (*The Church Incarnate* is the English version) was published in 1938, with a second edition following in 1947. Schwarz developed seven floor plans for churches based on a phenomenology of human behaviour. The author did not intend his catalogue of plans (ranging from the “sacred circle” to the “cathedral of all times”) to be understood as a manual. Instead, it was to become a “germ of all things”, a repository of images linking the inherent and constant qualities of humanity to different forms of worship.⁵¹ For Schwarz, architecture that appeared to be art did not serve a functional purpose; rather, it was a category in itself. This conviction may help to elucidate his controversial clashes with the functionalism of his time. For Schwarz, this purpose-oriented thinking was inextricably linked to his greatest adversary, the Bauhaus of Walter Gropius, rather than that of Mies van der Rohe, with whom he was a close friend. However, Schwarz was equally passionate and fearless in his debates with the ecclesiastical authorities. He was drawn into the debate by the frequent references to the liturgy as a building manual. In Schwarz’s view, a church building was not merely a “liturgical machine” or a functional building justified by liturgy. Rather, it was an artistically autonomous form that allowed for acts of worship.⁵²

The critical examination of what Schwarz called “liturgical functionalism” was all the more important because the reform of the liturgy gave a decisive turn to new church building (including his own). Schwarz’s close friend was Romano Guardini, a charismatic advocate of the new liturgy. The reformist monasteries in Belgium and northern France, which were already trying to renew the liturgy in the 19th century, were also geographically close to the Rhineland. The region could look to the Benedictine monastery of Maria Laach as a forerunner of liturgical reform, and to Johannes van Acken, parish priest in Gladbeck, as an eloquent spokesman.⁵³

Long before the Second Vatican Council, which endorsed the aims of the liturgical movement and promoted the common celebration of the liturgy through the spatial proximity of the congregation and the altar, the architects who realised church projects in the Rhineland were committed to the visibility and contextual integration of liturgical places under one roof. Ecclesiastical commissions had already approved these steps before the Council. The Charter of Rights of the Diocese of Cologne, amended at a synod in 1954, emphasised the importance of a close relationship between priest and congregation and condemned any separation between congregation and altar.⁵⁴

51 Pehnt, “Under the Sign of Liturgical Reform,” in *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock, 157-159.

52 Pehnt, “Under the Sign of Liturgical Reform,” in *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock, 159.

53 Pehnt, “Under the Sign of Liturgical Reform,” in *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock, 159.

54 Pehnt, “Under the Sign of Liturgical Reform,” in *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock, 159.

Other architects

The liberal spirit of the Rhineland and post-war church architecture in general allowed for a variety of subscriptions. In the Archdiocese of Cologne, parishes had a wide right of participation, although the *Codex Iuris Canonici* stated that no church could be built without the permission of the diocesan bishop. The board of trustees ensured that decisions were based on sound knowledge and even organised several fact-finding trips.⁵⁵

Several architects, working for both denominations (Protestant and Catholic), responded to the new load-bearing structures. Josef Lembrock (1918-1999), Dieter Oesterlen (1911-1994) and Fritz Schaller (1904-2002),⁵⁶ for example, used concrete folds, steel structures or grids to create dynamic, sometimes crystalline buildings and often column-free spaces. Others, such as Joachim Schürmann (1926-2022)⁵⁷ in the early 1960s, developed calm, disciplined and diaphanous spaces. Some, like Paul Schneider-Esleben (1915-2005), transformed churches into distinctive urban landmarks, as in the case of St Rochus (1953-1954) in Düsseldorf-Pempelfort. The church's clover-shaped floor plan recalls the 17th-century Baroque pilgrimage chapel by Georg Dienzenhofer (1643-1689) near Waldsassen, with continuous lining from wall to roof, suggesting the opening of a flower bud.⁵⁸



5a - 5b

Almost without exception, the major architectural works of the period are diverse and varied in themselves. Gottfried Böhm went in many different directions within the space of a few years. Take St Albert's Church in Saarbrücken

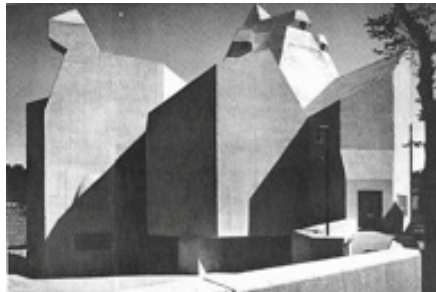
55 Pehnt, "Under the Sign of Liturgical Reform," in *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock, 159-161.

56 Josef Lehmbruck was a German architect, urban planner, advertising critic and member of the *Deutscher Werkbund*. Dieter Oesterlen was a German architect who studied at the Stuttgart School of conservative architectural philosophy, far removed from the ideals of the Bauhaus. Fritz Schaller was a German architect who designed several Catholic churches.

57 Joachim Schürmann was a German architect who realised several projects, including some churches. He was an award-winning architect throughout his career.

58 Pehnt, "Under the Sign of Liturgical Reform," in *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock, 161.

(1951-1953), for example, where he followed caravanserai-inspired⁵⁹ configurations from the late 1950s, in which the building's tent-like reinforced concrete structure comes to the fore. Around and above the ring of the nave is a structure of fourteen pale concrete arches. They surround the lantern like a buttress, culminating in the pilgrimage church of the Cathedral of the Virgin Mary (1966-1972) in Negives.⁶⁰



6 - 7

But the importance of regional character was repeatedly proclaimed. The Cardinal's Edict of 1912 emphatically recommended that architects look to "the glorious examples of the Rhine", but modernists such as Rudolf Schwarz also referred to the traditional models of the region. In any case, for many years architects were forced to collaborate with the past, as they had to work with a heritage in ruins. The fate of the Romanesque churches (almost all of which, from Bonn to Neuss, had been badly damaged in the war) was the subject of much discussion, especially during the lectures held in the winter of 1947 and 1948 in the auditorium of the University of Cologne. It was during this period that a *modus vivendi* was worked out between reconstruction and clear new construction. This *modus vivendi* didn't survive the next decade, however, because the changes that followed were also based on the principles of heritage conservation. The emphasis in the post-war years was on clean, simplified restoration, with exposed brickwork or large expanses of white plaster, reducing the historic building to an idealised state. To the next generation they seemed too frugal, ascetic and without historical value, and therefore unworthy of heritage protection.⁶¹

As a result, architects came to better understand the meaning of choir and apse, crypt and baptistry, pulpit and presbytery, not only in universities and lectures, but also through exposure to restoration work. Perhaps apse, cloverleaf choirs and massive walls have survived longer in the Rhineland than anywhere else because they were part of the everyday experience of architects. But the most significant influence of this experience was on the treatment of materials. In the Rhineland, architects treated stone as a relic, not only in reconstruction

59 Caravanserai – a hotel with a large open central area, used in the past in Eastern countries by groups of people and animals travelling together. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 3rd ed. (Barcelona: Longman, 1995), 188.

60 Pehnt, "Under the Sign of Liturgical Reform," in *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock, 161.

61 Pehnt, "Under the Sign of Liturgical Reform," in *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock, 161-163.

Fig. 6
St. Albert Church (1953-1954). Source: Wolfgang Jean Stock – *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, p. 161.

Fig. 7
Virgin Mary Cathedral – Negives. Source: Wolfgang Jean Stock – *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, p. 145.



projects but also in new buildings. "We wanted to integrate them into the masonry of the new building, so that the sacred stone could become the building material of a new work and the Old could be resurrected in the new," wrote Schwarz of the Santa Anna Church (1951-1956) in Düren, built entirely from salvaged rubble and considered Schwarz's most remarkable post-war church.⁶²

Although the plan of this church is still elongated and rectangular, efforts have been made to distribute the congregation more evenly, including a second, more signalling nave at right angles to the main body of the church. The 'L' shape has its meeting point in the altar. In the inner angle of the "L", to form a rectangle of the overall plan, there is a large atrium marked by a lowered ceiling. In this plan, the presbytery occupies a central position between the two sections of the faithful, who have a direct view of the altar and an oblique view of each other through the open atrium, bringing everyone into intimate communion. Inside each nave, the space is uninterrupted. The presbytery itself is part of this uninterrupted space, placed on a stepped platform in the corner of the "L", directly between the two sides. Behind the altar, a "Tree of Life" pattern emerges from the stone, undulating across the aisle and illuminated by fruits like small circles (like Lethaby's "Jewel Bearing Tree" in *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth*, a reference to a tradition of burning mythical trees, for example Moses' burning bush and the candlestick of the Jewish menorah); one of the boldest and most truly impressive works of 20th century sacred architecture: expressionism without whimsy. The sacristy, choir and ambulatory were excluded from this area. Instead, the choir was placed at the back of the nave, facing the altar. This arrangement puts everyone in sight of each other, separated only by the difference in level of their respective places. In this way, Schwarz was able to express the main recommendations of the liturgical revival: close contact between the altar and the nave and an unobstructed view of the altar in an open plan.⁶³

Hans Schilling, who also liked to use reclaimed materials, pointed out the more mundane aspect: these stones cost almost nothing. In addition to the fascination with the material itself, these encounters with damaged or destroyed historical materials have led to some strange syntheses. Like Gottfried Böhm in his Chapel of Our Lady in the Ruins (1947-1950), built on the ruins of the old

Fig. 8

St. Anna Church (1951-1956) in Düren – Rudolf Schwarz. Source: [de.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Anna_\(Düren\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Anna_(Düren)).

Fig. 9

St. Anna Church (1951-1956) in Düren – Rudolf Schwarz. Source: [de.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Anna_\(Düren\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Anna_(Düren)).

⁶² Rudolf Schwarz, *Kirchenbau: Welt von der Schwelle* (Heidelberg: F. H. Kerle Verlag, 1960), 223.

⁶³ Christ-Janer and Foley, "Church of St. Anna," in *Modern Church Architecture*, 62 and Heathcote, "Post-war Germany," in *Church Builders*, ed. Edwin Heathcote and Iona Spens, 43.

medieval church,⁶⁴ or Karl Band, who used four preserved cross-vaulted slabs in the Church of St John the Baptist (1960-1962). These gestures were both humble and self-confident.⁶⁵

The great Romanesque churches that had to be saved from collapse and brought back to life were not the only training grounds for post-war architects. In the province formerly known as *Germania Inferior*, a return to the Romanesque seemed a natural step. The Roman urban buildings of the first Christian centuries offered a marriage of both elements: Roman brick construction and the pious expression of late antique Christianity. Thus, the liturgical movement also drew on forms of worship from early Christianity. As the diocesan architect and professor Willy Weyres put it: "Almost every ecclesiastical reform [...] referred to and imitated the ancient Christian Basilica, albeit in a language appropriate to the period."⁶⁶ The Eternal City became a point of reference for many Rhine architects, such as Böhm, Schwarz and others. The techniques of brick masonry, for which Rome and the Rhineland archaeological sites were fertile training grounds, were all the more welcome because their application to new sacred buildings could be interpreted as a physical expression of the word in the living stones of the community, attributed to the Apostle Paul.⁶⁷

The concept of original Christian religiosity may have reinforced the determination of numerous architects in the context of evolving demands, extending beyond the liturgical reform initiated by the Second Vatican Council. Their objective shifted from designing the *ecclesia triumphans*, whose stately symbols would emerge from the emerging urban landscapes, to that of a more modest church. This novel approach entailed not only the provision of spiritual services for the community but also the embodiment of an empathetic partner in all the worldly joys and challenges. The new church buildings no longer exposed their congregations to the great parables of the world, but offered them shelter in the midst of the modern diaspora. The memory of the initial Christian edifices erected during the Roman period, including S. Costanza and S. Giovanni in Fonte, both constructed in the 4th century, and S. Stefano Rotondo, which was built in the 5th century, influenced the emergence of a centralized plan that began to emerge in the 1950s, despite the cautions issued at the Cologne Synod of 1954. Following the Second Vatican Council, these trends were successfully established through the implementation of polygonal, circular, square, or irregular plans.⁶⁸

Emil Steffann was an architect who espoused the values of humility and

64 Our Lady in the Ruins Chapel is a parish church that was built on the ruins of the old medieval church that was destroyed by bombing in 1943. Gottfried Böhm designed an octagonal tent-like structure. The church was seen as a war memorial, called *Madonna in der Trümmern* or *Madonna of the Ruins*.

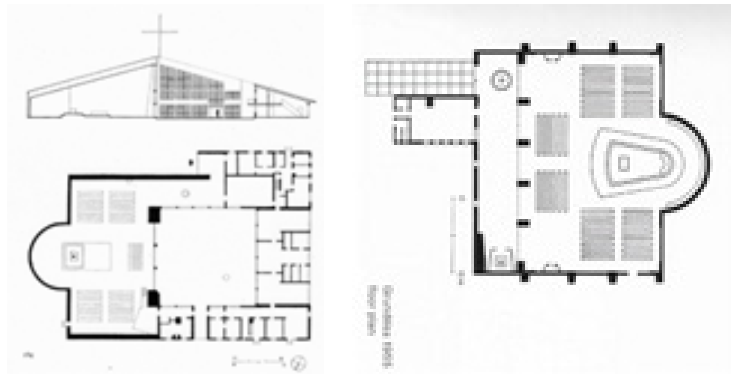
65 Pehnt, "Under the Sign of Liturgical Reform," in *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock, 163.

66 Willy Weyres and Otto Bartning, "Geschichtliche Grundlagen," in *Kirchen, Handbuch für den Kirchenbau*. (Munich: Callwey, 1959), 35.

67 Pehnt, "Under the Sign of Liturgical Reform," in *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock, 163.

68 Pehnt, "Under the Sign of Liturgical Reform," in *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock, 163-165.

simplicity, which were becoming increasingly prevalent in the architectural profession at the time. He consistently rejected the prevailing trend towards the construction of flexible, multi-purpose buildings, which were perceived to be suitable for the various uses typical of the time. Steffann, originally from Lübeck, discovered his own architectural path in Assisi and Rome. Since the 1950s, Steffann's architectural practice was based in the Rhineland. His work offered shelter, embracing the individual, through the construction of solid buildings that preserved and perpetuated traditional values. These buildings often incorporated typological elements borrowed from antiquity, such as the porch and atrium.



10 - 11

In his churches, such as Maria in den Benden (1956-1958) in Düsseldorf, the secular and sacred spaces were arranged in a manner reminiscent of a Roman villa, with the atrium serving as the focal point. This architectural approach was prescribed by the German Liturgical Commission. The church of St Lawrence (1955)⁶⁹ in Munich also exhibits a stripped-down, elemental interior, with the same curved apse as the church in Düsseldorf.

For Steffann, contemporary places of meditation and prayer were analogous to modern catacombs. This approach was perpetuated in the edifices of his former colleague, Heinz Bienefeld, albeit with a more diverse colour palette and a more varied ornamental texture of the walls. The community centre in Cologne-Blumenberg, designed by Steffann and completed after his death, is an example of his work. In this, one of the rare new churches of the period, the principal elements of the practice of faith appeared to be arranged in a linear fashion, as if they were positioned on either side of a path.⁷⁰

This exemplifies the manner in which Christian architects collaborated with liturgists in post-war Germany, with the bishops' providing encouragement and guidance. Consequently, architecture was flourishing in this area, capable of translating the liturgical and pastoral needs of the People of God.⁷¹

Fig.10

Plan of the Maria in den Benden Church. Source: G E Kidder Smith – *The new churches of Europe*, p. 184.

Fig. 11

Plan of the St. Lawrence Church. In both churches Steffann used the same plan with assembly around the altar on three sides and curved apse as the fourth side. Source: Wolfgang, Jean Stock – *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, p. 45.

69 The St Lawrence project is considered by scholars to be an architectural classic of the liturgical movement. Cunha, "O MRAR e os anos de ouro", 72.

70 Pehnt, "Under the Sign of Liturgical Reform," in *European Church Architecture 1950-2000*, ed. Wolfgang Jean Stock, 165.

71 João de Almeida, "Documentário eclesiástico sobre a construção de Igrejas," *Novellae Olivarum* ano XII, no. 120 (December 1954): 313.

Conclusion

With this brief presentation of the development of modern Catholic architecture in post-war Germany in the Rhineland, we can see that, despite a country devastated by wars, especially the Second World War, architects such as Dominikus Böhm and Rudolf Schwarz, visionaries of an architecture appropriate to their time and dedicated to religious architecture, managed to combine the new guidelines established by the liturgical movement with modern architecture, achieving a significant “marriage” between the two, which gave rise to beautiful examples of modern churches.

In the interwar period, Dominikus Böhm and Rudolf Schwarz created emblematic works that were considered modern for the time. This is the case with Böhm's St Engelbert's (1930-1932), where he demonstrated a move towards a modern church, designed on the basis of some of the new norms of the liturgical movement. Built on a circular plateau, the church left behind the rectangular plans of basilicas, made possible by the new techniques of new architecture, without obstructing the sight and hearing of the high altar, as the congregation is distributed more evenly. Its white interior walls, without any ornamentation, do not distract the faithful.

The presbytery is still slightly separated from the assembly, but without any separating physical element, and it is higher than the advocates of the liturgical movement would like. The high altar in the centre is designed so that ceremonies can be held facing the congregation. And the natural lighting in the nave is serene, contrasting with the intense light received in the presbytery through the large side window. In this work Böhm presented the first steps towards the modern church, and in this project one of the focal points was natural light, one of the elements that Böhm knew how to work with.

Rudolf Schwarz's design for the Corpus Christi Church (1929-1930) remained more traditional. He developed a rectangular floor plan (in procession) and a pulpit in the centre of the nave. Despite this, we can find some modern guidelines, such as: simple white walls, without ornamentation; the nave and presbytery are well lit by upper windows, contrasting with the low side nave and without any natural lighting. In this project, the architect focused on two key aspects of modern architecture: functionality and rationality. These aspects were exemplified in the paradigmatic use of the shape of each part, as exemplified by the nave and tower. Despite its resemblance to industrial buildings, the design maintains a distinct identity. The raised presbytery, with no separating elements, has the high altar in the centre, allowing for ceremonies to be conducted facing the assembly.

Despite developing modern architecture, Schwarz retained some traditional elements, as previously mentioned. However, the architect's primary focus for this project was on understanding the function, with the objective of creating a simple yet effective design that would bring the assembly closer to the altar.

Following the Second World War, German architecture had reached a more “mature” stage, with a greater emphasis on elaborate designs within the context of the Liturgical Movement for modern churches. Böhm and Schwarz refined their approach and exerted a significant influence on other architects at the time. Gottfried Böhm, the son of Dominikus, was one of the architects of this new phase. He worked in his father’s office and undertook a number of apprenticeship trips, thereby increasing his architectural repertoire.

In the post-Second World War period, we observe the emergence of more elaborate architectural designs by Böhm and Schwarz. Böhm was responsible for the design Church of Maria Königin (1952-1954), which is regarded as one of the most significant post-war buildings in Germany. The architect employed a square plan, in contrast to the circular plan utilised in St. Engelbert, with the objective of facilitating closer proximity of the assembly to the high altar, which is surrounded by three sides. The white walls contrast with the only stained-glass wall to the south (on the side of the nave), in contrast to the all-white walls of Böhm’s first phase. The focal point of the work is the lighting through the stained glass.

The nave and presbytery are illuminated by the same focal point, the stained-glass wall, which serves to differentiate the two areas. The presbytery is less elevated than the nave, without the need to separate elements. The high altar is situated in the centre of the church, in a prominent position, and is ready for celebrations in the versus populum orientation. The interior is characterised by a neutral palette, which contrasts with the use of red on the internal pillars and the stained-glass wall.

The stained-glass wall contains a door that opens onto a transparent glass corridor, which in turn connects to the circular baptistery, also constructed entirely of stained glass, situated outside the church’s internal walls. Böhm’s concept can be traced back to a reinterpretation of the traditional external baptisteries, which he connected via a transparent corridor to the church. He subsequently employed this concept in a project in Brazil, however, the Brazilian baptistry was connected to the church beneath the same roof. The church, situated in close proximity to South Park and surrounded by verdant greenery, was conceived with the intention of harmoniously integrating with its surrounding environment through the incorporation of a stained-glass wall.

In the same period, Schwarz designed the Church of St. Michael (1952-1956), which features an elongated elliptical floor plan and other adjacent elliptical areas. The interior walls are white, devoid of ornamentation, with the exception of the ribs of the concrete structure, which were painted moss green. This hue is nearly neutral. The building is illuminated by a continuous upper window throughout. This lighting effect serves to enhance the visual impression of the sky-blue painted roof, which appears to float.

The presbytery, which is relatively low-ceilinged and devoid of any architectural divisions, features a high altar situated in the centre and bathed in light.

Despite the elongated nave, the presence of the adjoining chapels, choir and intimate chapel enables the celebrant to be situated closer to the assembly and to face the three sides of the assembly.

A commonality between this project and the aforementioned Portuguese church is the presence of the baptismal font in close proximity to the entrance doors, situated on the same axis as the main altar. This is in keeping with the understanding that baptism is the first sacrament, whereby the individual is initiated into the community and subsequently directed towards the altar. The location of the font facilitates the participation of the assembly during a baptism.

In addition to the aforementioned developments in German Catholic architecture, some churches were rebuilt in a new language, utilising materials that were incorporated into their replacements. This was exemplified by Rudolf Schwarz's St. Anna Church and Gottfried Böhm's Chapel Madonna of the Ruins, which employed stones from the rubble, combining old elements with new concepts in order to preserve a certain memory.

Gottfried Böhm collaborated with his father until the latter's demise, subsequently assuming control of the architectural practice and continuing to serve as a seminal figure in the field of modern German Catholic architecture. A considerable number of other German architects were influenced by the projects and ideas of Rudolf Schwarz and Dominikus Böhm.

When considered in its entirety (and including numerous other examples that are beyond the scope of this discussion), the German contribution to post-World War II church architecture was no less significant than that of the pre-war period. It represented the culmination of the experimentation and theorising of the previous generation and the fruition of the pioneering work of Böhm and Schwarz. Indeed, it can be argued that it represents the most significant contribution of a single nation in this field.

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