

A Comparative Study: Catholic Church in the Hague by Aldo van Eyck

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INTRODUCTION
The subject of the study is the architect Aldo van Eyck and his design of the Roman Catholic church *Pastoor van Ars* designed in 1954 (completed in 1969) years. In the 1960s, Catholicism within the Netherlands was undergoing some new changes because of the Second Vatican Council, and the effects of this event were pervasive among all church. The philosophy and organization of some local churches have also been reorganized, with new demands for space for daily activities. The questions raised in the article are how groundbreaking this church was, what its influence was and whether its construction was linked to the changes in the religious world in the 1960s.

CHAPTER ONE

Changes, traditions, and buildings of the 20th century Catholic world

- The Modern Catholic Theology and Liturgy.

The 1960s was a time of change and openness for the religious world, all of Europe is experiencing post-war changes in attitudes and the opening up brought about by various technological advances. As the most widespread and influential religious community, the many Roman Catholic churches in the Netherlands were considered to be the most enthusiastic in church building at the time, even before 1960, when social care and interest in smaller families of all kinds had become a direction of exploration for the church, which is noticed and discussed over the decade. In the face of the gradual secularization of the masses in the 20th century, the Roman Catholic Church sought to find opportunities to change the philosophy of the Church in order to create a more agreeable and relevant way for the people to accept it. The effort was known as *the Second Vatican Council*, which was held in the Vatican in 1962 and had a profound impact on many churches in Europe. Much of the Roman Catholic church architecture prior to this was concerned with sacred space, searching for a spatial experience in the soaring vertical direction. In the 1960s, when the Church's philosophy was being renewed, attention was gradually given to the participation of ordinary believers and to everyday life. In some of the many new church buildings built during this period, many of the principles of modernism were given a new spatial interpretation in religious architecture. For example, the innovation of spatial experience, the care of user perception, new materials and structural forms make these new ideas possible.

Especially after *the Second Vatican Council*, the involvement of the public in the life of the Roman Catholic Church was given more attention. In the Netherlands, Catholic political parties continued to have a strong voice until the mid-1960s, when they became the leading political and

religious group in Europe, and it was during this period that the Roman Catholic community underwent a series of changes in the Netherlands, after *the Second Vatican Council* had achieved a large number of meetings and consensus. Catholics were encouraged to participate in secularized activities to express their personal views, and the Church was more welcoming than ever to Catholics in meetings and other activities. It was widely regarded that public participation of community life of the time was enlarged. In the literature of this period, 'liturgy' is a key word that is widely mentioned in it. As I currently understand it, it gradually became a new descriptor of 'contemporary' religious life in the 1960s. It represented how people would participate in religious activities, appreciate religious artwork, and even how they would appreciate and experience church architecture. The Catholic Bishops of Germany concluded considering the interpretation of liturgy: "The church edifice today is intended for the people of our times." "The most significant and worthy needs of modern mankind must here find their fulfillment, the urge toward community life". (Sutfin, 1959)

After half a century of exploration of religious art, numerous manifestations of religious art have been expressed in large numbers since the modernist period. In the field of architecture, a plethora of new materials and structures have brought about unprecedented forms. Only a decade earlier, while people were surprised and throwing admiration at *Chapelle Notre-Dame-du-Haut*, modern interpretations of religious architecture were rapidly emerging in the middle of the century. Many architects of this period offered numerous experimental explorations in the field of religious architecture. The most obvious characteristic they possessed was the innovation of new materials, structures, and spatial forms brought about by the period. Since the nineteenth century, when architectural theory entered the more widely recognized 'modern' period, Roman Catholic church architecture has more often than not adopted the forms of the historical tradition, which is not 'contemporary' and does not convey the spirit of the age they belong to. Some architectural theorists from 1950 to 1960 have expressed their thoughts and concerns about this kind of fragmentation that exists in the spirit. The history of historical styles cannot be replicated, and even the unavoidable topic of style itself is gradually considered to be difficult to touch the essence of the modern spirit (Graham, 1955).

This theology mentioned above is most evident in the discussion of the plan of Roman Catholic architecture, which has a relatively definite and definitive design based on the traditionalist view of the need for interior space in the church. This was determined by the relatively traditional way of conducting religious life, the way people appreciated art, and the requirements of liturgy. Architectural theorists from this period held the view that "among the many historical styles we know, artists or architects were working in various ways in the manner of their time, and there is no difference between our modern and their modern, so why should we insist on imitating and trying to reconstruct historical styles in the period in which we live. (Lavanoux, 1959) " From this point of view, in the mid-1950s, reshaping the spirit of religious architecture in new ways and responding better to the community as well as to life was becoming the dominant perception among architects. In the mid-1960s, and especially after *the Second Vatican Council* in 1963, Roman Catholic church buildings that were not constrained in their form by traditional ideas were built throughout Europe. Within the Netherlands, Roman Catholicism, on the other hand, was given special political attributes. There were political groups with a religious background in the social community (*known as Pillarization, or verzuiling in Dutch*), among which the Catholic community was active from roughly 1904-1977, and after the end of the Second Vatican Council, this political group experienced

a decline while the number of Catholic churches being built was increasing.

The Second Vatican Council's signal of openness outside the religious community was obvious enough, and in fact there was another reform of the religious community going on at the same time, namely the liturgical reform. The latter lasted longer, began earlier, and had an equally important impact on church architecture. To summarize, the phrase that circulated among the liturgical reforms was "is it necessary to look like a church". Apparently, there is no support or endorsement of modern architectural design in any written document. The liturgical reform section is more about traditionalism, hierarch, or wording than about more superficial measures. For example, the church council was more concerned with the placement of the altar, whether it was located between the shrine and the people, the appropriate location for the celebrant, and so on. They are more concerned with specific guidelines for action, closer to simple instructions than dogmatic language.

Among the many outcomes of the entire Second Vatican Council, there were several principles that had a potential impact on subsequent daily religious activities and the design of church buildings:

1 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy

The definition of 'liturgy' changed in the daily life of the individual religious. The revised liturgy is more participatory and more concerned with the effects of participation than the formerly more formal activities. For example, the use of vernacular languages for activities is allowed, and the believers are more encouraged to become more active in the life of the Church. In this sense, the church building has shifted from the traditional single sacred space to a space more capable of accommodating daily life, so we can see in the church buildings of this period that more types of functions were integrated, such as smaller assembly rooms set aside from the main prayer space, living areas for church personnel, and so on. Accordingly, the space for the assembly also took over the position of the shrine and occupied a more dominant position.

2 Pastoral Constitution, 'signs of the times'

The acceptance of the many other churches, denominations, or religiously liberal groups in Christendom increased, and church planting has since become more inclusive of people from all fields or faiths, including unbelievers. The church will work with them in a more open and cooperative manner, listening to their voices and embracing them. In this way, this has led to a greater freedom and voice for architects in the design of church buildings. The conference also noted that *'In spite of the guarded approval of biblical scholarship under Pius XII, scholars suspected of Modernism were silenced right up to Vatican II'*. Although this change in attitude may have involved more scholars of religion and theology, we can note in the general sense that the field of religion was tilting in the direction of modern scholarship. In a sense, the conference contributed to the Church's reconceptualization of the term 'modernism', which in the first decade of the twentieth century was still commonly perceived in religious circles as *'a collection of anti-religion'*, as Pope Pius X declared. The many social changes of the first half of the twentieth century contributed to a re-examination of modernism by the religious community, an examination that had a socio-political context. The second conference that followed saw a remarkable reconciliation within the religious community.

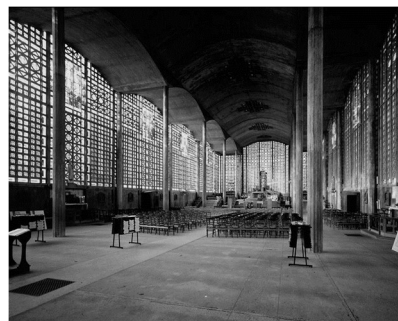
Among the many churches of this period, there are plenty of designs that are beautiful, elegant and perfectly suited to modern religious life, among them is the *Pastoor van Ars Church* by Aldo van Eyck, built in 1969 in The Hague. It will be the main object of analysis in this thesis, along with a comparative analysis of some other church designs. Although Aldo van Eyck had no previous experience in building church buildings, nor was he himself a Catholic, church architecture was not

an unfamiliar topic, and in the article he wrote in 1796, he mentioned that he had a good understanding of church architecture, partly from the "Wheel of Heaven" project he had designed a few years earlier, and the rest from his knowledge of religious life (specifically, worship) and the needs of his clients. (Eyck, 1976)

- Modern Catholic Architecture and Modern Material.

At its foundation, "modern religious architecture" is inherently self-contradictory or not entirely generalizable from a modern perspective. Religion itself is strongly historical in nature, so that various fields related to religion inevitably need to deal with the new challenges of the modern era. In the case of church buildings, the main function they carry - religious worship - also has strong historical and traditional attributes. Therefore, in the pre-20th century and early century church buildings, the specific use and layout of the building are closely related, and these buildings are more conservative in form, making concessions to the presentation of artworks and subject to heritage. This phenomenon is more evident in Roman Catholic church architecture. This phenomenon is even more pronounced in Roman Catholic church architecture. Adolf Loos's comment of decoration (^[2]1910, *Ornement et Crime*) conveys in part the opposing views that existed between the claims of modern architecture and the architectural traditions inherited from the 19th century. As a precursor to the maturation of modernism, the principle of reducing unnecessary ornamentation, which he inherited and summarized, was one of the many main features of modernist architecture. This claim fits with the phenomenon that occurred in Catholic church architecture in the mid-20th century, although the process of deconstruction of religious architecture as such was slower than in other types of buildings, and the free opening of church forms was widely liberalized after *the Second Vatican Council*, when considering the case of the Roman Catholic Church.

One of the new changes in church architecture in the mid-twentieth century was the ecclesiastical relaxation of material requirements for church buildings as 'holy places', as is widely believed. Prior to this, reinforced concrete was invented as a new material with new characteristics but was often used to imitate or replace the heavy structure of stone and brick. One of the first architects to apply reinforced concrete to a church building was the Frenchman Auguste Perret, who argued that reinforced concrete had better properties than traditional masonry, allowing for larger window openings, changing the way the dome was designed, and removing the heavy flying buttresses and the thick walls at the bottom.

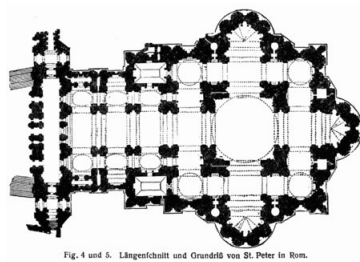


F,1-1. Église Notre-Dame du Raincy

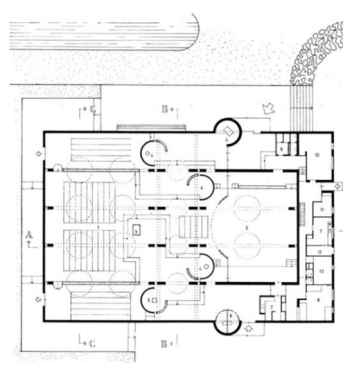
Perret's Church of Notre Dame (*Le Raincy*, 1922-1925) is one of his experiments with this new material, although in this case he did not completely escape the constraints imposed by traditional building forms. It is worth noting that when Perret first presented his ideas, they were considered

controversial, and he even had to use the help of his brother, an architectural commissioner, to ensure that his ideas would be implemented. Less than half a century later, a change in general perception has led to an almost complete reversal in the public's appreciation of church architecture and a renewed recognition of the church and Perret himself for the use of new materials. It is interesting to note the change in public acceptance and standards over this period of time, as well as the change in Perret's own assessment from 'radical innovator' to 'traditionalist among modernists', precisely because his design, although innovative, are inevitably more conservative than those of mid-twentieth century churches.

During 1950-1960, there were also new churches in Europe that used brick and concrete structures, such as the *Madonna dei Poveri* (designed by Luigi Figini & Gino Pollini, 1954) church, and the *Heilige Gerardus Majellakerk* (designed by Jan de Jong, 1957), which are fully modern in material and structure, but still within the pattern of churches formed in the early 20th century in terms of spatial experience, plan composition and facade composition. Among them was *Pastoor van Ars*, a Roman Catholic church designed by Aldo van Eyck, which is more interesting than all others. Of course, there are also excellent church designs similar to that of this Catholic Church in The Hague. After 1960, Johannes Hendrik van den Broek and Jakob Berend Bakema also had an important influence on the development of Dutch modernist architecture, and their *Reformierte Kirche* (Nagele, 1960) was in many ways a groundbreaking church design, but this is not the topic to be discussed here. Returning to the topic of other church features mentioned earlier, some of the very obvious examples are the sloping roofs that still exist in these churches, the repetitive rhythm of window openings on the facade, or a facade that is deliberately presented to the viewer. The retention of the pitched roof is unnecessary for modern buildings that generally use reinforced concrete structures, a form that is motivated by sentiment or fixed impressions. (Such designs still existed as late as the 1960s, from which we can understand the uniqueness of the *Firminy Church* and *Pastoor van Ars*). In addition, an easily overlooked feature of these slightly earlier church designs is that the main entrance is invariably located in the center of the main facade or on the central axis of the building plan, a feature inherited from traditional Roman Catholic churches. In Van Eyck's Hague Catholic Church, these features are completely avoided. Whether it is its use of a flat roof or a plan that breaks almost all the common restrictions on churches, they reflect the uniqueness of the design. As for the *Firminy Church*, which is used as an analogy, its uniqueness comes almost entirely from Le Corbusier's own philosophy of design strong enough to have been maintained since *Chapel Ronchamp*. As for the case of Roman Catholic church in the Hague, it shown us an alternative pioneer church design with uniqueness, which made it a valuable case.



F,1-2. A traditional typical Roman Catholic church plan. (St. Peter, Rome)



F,1-3. Pastoor van Ars kerk floor plan. (the Hague)

CHAPTER TWO

A Dutch case: The Pastoor van Ars kerk and further

- Practical background concerning the building

The 1908 city plan of The Hague includes a series of housing and urban facilities around the city center, before the southwest part of The Hague was included in the plan, including the 'Plan West' area where the future church of *Pastoor van Ars* will be built. In the next city plan of 1927, the 'Plan West' plan classified the future church site as residential, and no urgent need for a new church arose in this period of parish planning. (The location of the church is shown in Figure 2-2). In the 1927 plan, at least two community churches are located in this area, both of which are shown on the map as built elements and were built earlier. Other church buildings in The Hague are located closer to the city center, so as urbanization continues to expand to the southwest, new parishes and corresponding new church buildings are necessary. This may be one of the reasons why *Pastoor van Ars* was built decades later.



F,2-1. City Expansion Plan, 1908



F,2-2. Plan West, 1927

In this 1935 city plan of The Hague, the boundaries of the city were expanded further to the southwest, and the plan was designed to enclose the location of the future church, so we can be sure that the pattern of the urban environment had already been determined 20 years before the church was designed by Van Eyck in 1964, which is not a long time in terms of city development. It is worth noting that the expansion of the city was accompanied by an increase in the number of public facilities, including, of course, places of worship. In particular, in the 1935 version of the plan, a larger proportion of the area was residential than in the previous two plans, meaning that the scale, function and density of the buildings in this area were more in line with the pattern of the residential area. Between 1930 and 1960, the Catholic Church in The Hague redefined more parishes to accommodate and organize activities for the growing urban population, especially after

the Congress, and underwent a series of top-down reorganizations within the Church, including the merging of some parishes and the inclusion of more ordinary people to work with as religious.



F,2-3. City Expansion Plan, 1935, the Hague

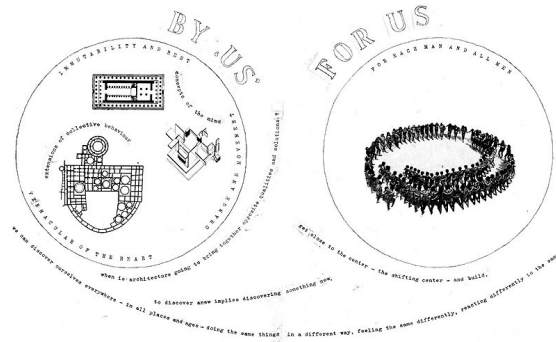
[1] Starting in 1963, Van Eyck received a commission to design a new church for a new parish in the western part of The Hague, a commission from the local church council. The church's pastor, J.H. Van Vliet, sought advice from the Amsterdam *Stedelijk* Museum with the intention of finding a suitable designer for a new church building, and it fell to Van Eyck. The building is in a residential area with a canal and public gardens around the site, so the site is not very large and the possibility of further expansion of the building is low. (In fact, this did not happen) The design requirements were relatively simple and straightforward, the most immediate requirement being a sacred space for four hundred people, a portion of which should be flexible and adaptable to the time of day, the seasons, and the needs of the service, in order to obtain a larger interior space. Additionally, an additional space for two hundred people was required, along with living space for the parish priest. Due to budgetary constraints, the space available for the building was not very large. In addition to the above objective conditions, the church also required that the project be accompanied by an additional 'mentor' (or more precisely, an assistant or consultant, 'mentor' was mentioned by the church members.) With experience in church architecture. The contract for this design was formally signed in June 1963, and the initial concept was completed between 1963 and 1964, with one version of the design refined due to budgetary and space constraints, and the

revised scheme completed in 1966.

- Early concepts and the Design Language.

Before we start talking about the building, let's look at the contribution of TEAM X, founded in 1957, in promoting modernism, to help understand Van Eyck's early concept for the church and the general theme of his from during this period. Although the 'International Paradigm' was motivated more by the reform of modernism than by purely aesthetic considerations. If we look at the *Église Notre-Dame du Raincy* mentioned above, or the more famous Le Corbusier's *pilgrimage chapel Notre Dame du Haut*. For example, we can sense the difference between these chapel buildings and those designed in the 1960s. These earlier chapels, although completed only a decade or so ago, exhibit a strong heroism, while still possessing strong traditional church design principles. I am not sure for the moment whether this phenomenon emerged simply as an early and incomplete attempt at a 'modern reform' of religious architecture, or whether the religious interpretation of modernist ideas between 1945 and 1960 was itself fraught with controversy and opposing views. Prior to 1960, modernist church architecture exhibited two main stronger senses of form: in addition to material features, they used curves, a strong formal language of curved surfaces, or adapted and innovated on the model of traditional forms. TEAM X, on the other hand, brought a new formal language in the 1960s. Alison and Peter Smithson bring a brutalism, a more abstract, functional architecture. The team omitted the still classical principles of early modernism, and the proposition was broad and inclusive, in keeping with TEAM X's propagation of the fundamental principle of the human. This can be noticed in small and easily overlooked aspects, such as the tendency for post-1960s church design to be progressively smaller in scale compared to other churches, thus de-emphasizing 'heroic sacred spaces' or conservative cultural aesthetics. The most obvious feature is the height of the stories, the appearance of single-story sacred spaces, and the fact that they are not lofty spaces.

The period around 1963 was an important one for Van Eyck's practice of his graphic and design language, especially for church architecture. During this time, while designing the Roman Catholic Church in The Hague, he also completed a competition proposal for another church building, widely known as '*Wheels of Heaven*', a winning proposal that was in fact no less influential than the one that was completed in The Hague, and which also communicated Van Eyck's vision of the church in a clear and direct way. It is equally clear and direct in conveying Van Eyck's thinking and understanding of church architecture. Because of its more conceptual nature, '*Wheels of heaven*' may be incorrectly interpreted as an experimental work for the Hague church, but the fact is that they were designed almost simultaneously, the difference being that the one in competition took less time to complete, since, of course, there was no need for design modifications as in the case of the commission. The interpretation of sacred space in both proposals is based on the design philosophy proposed earlier by Van Eyck and considered to be '*the Otterlo Circles*'.

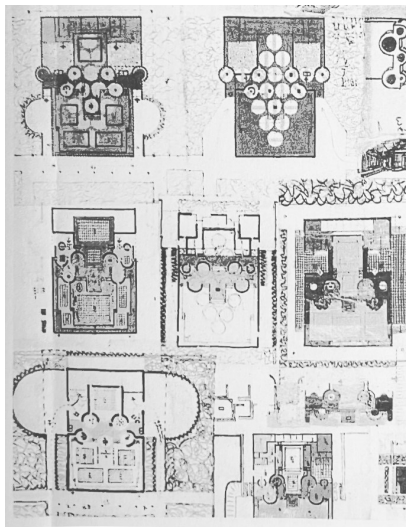


F,2-4. the Otterlo Circles, 1963.

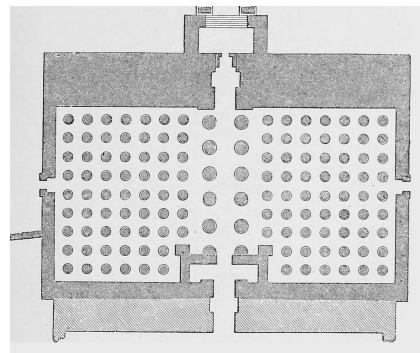
At the 1959 CIAM conference in Otterlo, Van Eyck proposed 'the Otterlo Circles' to summarize a symbolic guiding principle that would help explain his design philosophy. This philosophical principle consists of two parts, which intuitively present themselves as two circles containing images. In a modified version released in 1963, the circle on the left is titled 'par nous' and contains a drawing of the Acropolis Parthenon, a drawing of the *maison particulière* (Theo van Doesburg), and a drawing of *Pueblo Arroyo* in New Mexico. The three parts symbolize the 'timelessness of classical architecture', the 'modernist movement' and the 'sentiment of the countryside'. The circle on the right is named 'for us' and shows a group of Kayapo Indians in a circle, representing the social relations of human beings. Together, the two circles form a harmonious relationship between architecture and society. In terms of the origin of the idea, the end of the Otterlo Conference in 1959 and the completion of the construction of the Van Eyck-designed Children's Home in Amsterdam occurred almost simultaneously. Considering the consistency in design philosophy between the two, we can assume that the design methods and ideas used by Van Eyck in the 1960s were developed from his 'Otterlo circle'. This is reflected in the following aspects:

1 Tectonic principles and geometry

The early sketches of the design of the church in The Hague show a strong geometric character, from which it is clear that Van Eyck undertook a great deal of graphic exploration. The interspersed use of circular walls and square rooms is prevalent in many of his sketches, and the use of circular elements in an almost array-like layout, as well as the use of obvious symmetries, gives a classical tone to the overall plan of the building. This is similar to *'the Otterlo Circles'* which echoes the *'timelessness of classical architecture'* mentioned in *'the Otterlo Circles'*. If we compare these sketches to the temple architecture of the classical period, it is easy to note the similarities between them, with symmetry and geometry being a relatively common expression of sacred space. Compare the plan of *Precinct of Amun-Re (Karnak Temple Complex, 1300BC, Egypt)* and notice the array of columns, the square enclosed space, and the symmetry of the space. A similar plan composition is present in the sketches of the Catholic Church in The Hague, and this feature was maintained in the final floor plan. The circular barrel-shaped space in the design can be understood as a variation of the column network of classical temple architecture, retaining its spatial elements, but with a completely changed function and form. In fact, if we make some observations, one of the more obvious differences between modernist church architecture and traditional church architecture is the disappearance of the colonnade space. In the case of Roman Catholic architecture, it was the Basilica that was gradually replaced by a more integral and simplified interior space.



F,2-6. concept drawings of Pastoor van Ars.



F,2-5. Precinct of Amun-Re, Karnak Temple Complex, Egypt.

In an article written by Van Eyck in 1976, he discusses the original motivation for the design of The Hague Catholic Church, as follows: *'I wish to combine the quality of a low crypt-like space and that of a tall gothic-like one. Low when seated during mass; tall when walking.'* The contrast between the two spaces is indeed present and brings about a very strong crypt-like experience, as shown in the section of the church, if we place the interior photograph with that of a historical Cathedral church, for example, the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral in England.



F,2-7. *Canterbury Cathedral crypt.*

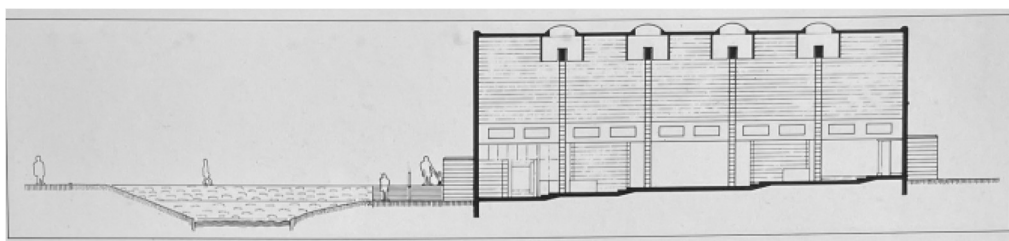


F,2-8. *Interior photograph.*

2 A humanistic design

In the Catholic Church of The Hague, Van Eyck's design also differs from earlier modernist churches in its arrangement of function and use. One of the issues raised by the Vatican Council at the time regarding the modern church was that no church space had yet emerged that could be used for multiple purposes, and indeed most Roman Catholic buildings prior to that time had been a relatively conservative and traditional type of building, often not concerned with much convenience of use beyond the general purpose of assembly. In the case of The Hague Church, in addition to the needs of the church commissioners, the lighting was designed differently from other Roman Catholic churches in order to accommodate the congregational function of the interior space. In the past, churches usually created more directional lighting through the contrast between the walls and the void to focus the lighting of the interior space on the pulpit or the shrine, a common example being the use of long vertical windows. In the design of the Catholic Church in The Hague, however, Van Eyck uses lighting from the top, which are the concrete cylinders distributed across the roof. This brings a brighter environment to the interior spaces of the church, so that the centerpiece of the building is no longer a shrine, but a gathering space for people to use. In addition, the pulpit is located at almost the same height as the meeting place. The church's comment on this in the 1960s was also that *'the most fascinating aspect of the building is the moment when the two contrasting spaces are connected'*.

Van Eyck has mentioned that the high and low parts of the interior are deliberately made to 'open upwards', specifically by using a vertical space with a height to width ratio greater than one, and a skylight at the top, which allows the light to shine evenly on people and creates a specific visual guidance. In fact, interior spaces with a height to width ratio greater than one are still common in many examples of modern Roman Catholic architecture, and the vast majority of such spaces are used for the celebration of Mass, a feature inherited from traditional church architecture.



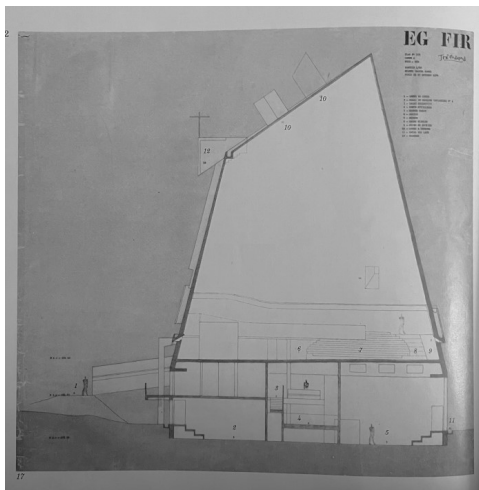
F,2-9. *cross section on the 'sacred way'.*

Also, regarding this highest part of the building, Van Eyck says that it is an 'indoor street'-like space with a sacred attribute attached, and although this may not sound like a good explanation of his design concept, it is indeed what he himself said. In this section, we can see this part of the interior space, where Van Eyck has deliberately adjusted the floor height so that the average interior floor height of the building is slightly below the height of the street and divided it into sections of different heights. He uses this approach to suggest the function of the different parts of the building and calls it the 'sacred way'. For 'those who believe in the altar' (*meaning the clergy of the church, I presume*), the upward space with its multiple heights is sacred, an architectural expression of religiosity used by Van Eyck. His explanation for this is '*If the space is experienced by many as a sacred one after all, that may, I hope, be due to the way matters not specifically sacred were handled architecturally.*'

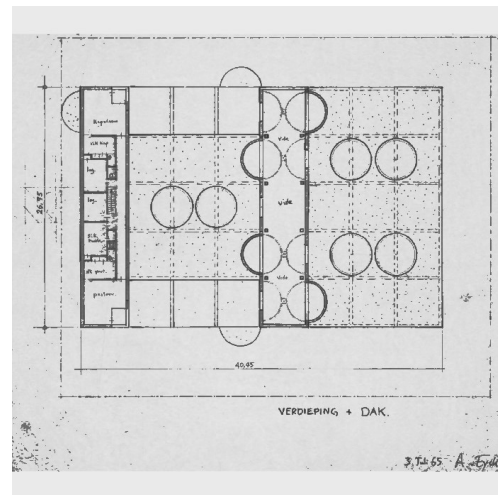
- **A Comparative Perspective: With Firminy Church, Material and structure.**

As mentioned earlier, the church buildings of the 1950-1955 period had a completely new look, but they still had overtones of modernist design from the early 20th century. The most obvious of them are Le Corbusier's *Chapel Ronchamp* (1950-1955), as well as *La Tourette Monastery* (1950-1955) and *Firminy Church* (1961), which are among the most representative post-war church buildings. While still maintaining the grand narrative of traditional church architecture in terms of plan and space, they incorporate more geometric shapes and, as the Church had earlier commented on modernism, break almost all the norms of previous church architecture. The only constant is a grand narrative style, reflected in the grand geometric masses and still towering interior spaces. In Le Corbusier's churches, this 'chimney' type of shape was often used. We can understand this space as a symbol, in his explanation, '*I built the Chapel of Ronchamp and the Convent of La Tourette because the program was favorable, as also were the landscape conditions exceptional. I am not a builder of churches; I am continually obliged to decline the offers made to me.*' In contrast to the intention of traditional church design, modernist churches' use of materials and unlike the intention of traditional church design, the modernist church has the principle of using materials only according to structural and spatial needs and Architect Frederick Gibberd commented on this: '*The approach to cathedral design, for example, is similar to that of a hospital*'. The implication is that both are function-driven designs. The modern church building is innovative in its concrete construction and in the techniques used in its construction, so it is concerned with modern progress.

In the design of *Pastoor van Ars* church, the use of concrete as a structure is relatively conservative. In contrast, the sections of the *Chapel Ronchamp* that are finished in concrete are very free in form, and they form pictorial compositional patterns on all sides of the building. The interior of *Firminy Church* is simpler and more straightforward than *Chapel Ronchamp*, in fact, it is closer to the final result of *Pasroor van Ars*. If van Eyck's church is based on his 1963 concept of 'the *Wheels of Heaven*', the *Firminy Church*, which was conceived in 1962, is based on *Chapel Ronchamp* and may have drawn on some of the experience of *La Tourette Monastery*. Both were designed as Roman Catholic churches and were completed close to each other. It is worth noting that the construction of *Firminy Church* finally began in 1971 and was completed in 2006 due to the death of Le Corbusier in 1965, among other reasons. In addition to this, the original design was retained in its entirety.

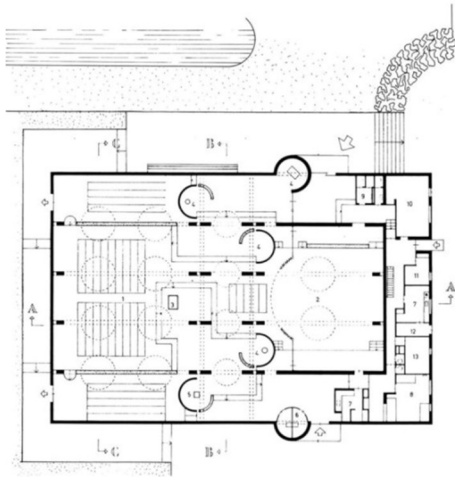


F,2-10. *Firminy Church* 1962

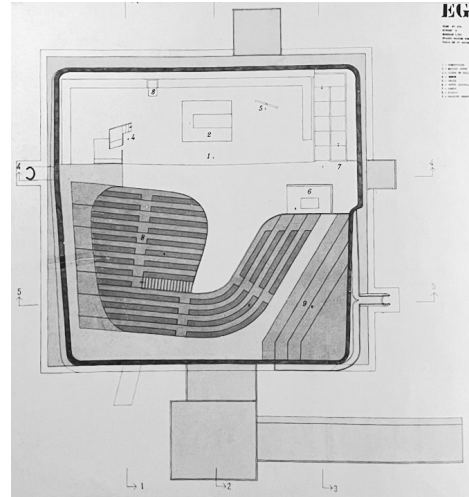


F,2-11. *Pastoor van Ars Church* early concept 1963

In *Pastoor van Ars*'s design, the classical nature of the church building is clearly noticeable in the geometric composition of the plan. This composition of vertical walls interspersed with circular structures is a frequent feature of van Eyck's designs of this period. Examples include 'the *Wheels of Heaven*' project and the *Sculpture Pavilion*, *Sonsbeek Exhibition*. Van Eyck's original concept was to combine a crypt-like space with a soaring Gothic space, as is mentioned before. The result, as presented, is a combination of masonry and concrete structures, achieved through the use of an enclosed single-story interior and a slightly taller cylinder. The use of this material creates a consistency in the spatial feeling of the interior and exterior, a natural contrast between the masonry of the walls and the concrete of the cylinder, both of which are unadorned materials. Unlike *Firminy Church*'s use of concrete throughout, this approach is more reflective of the structural properties of the material itself. Further, the materials used for the interior floors and furniture are more elaborate and complex. It continues to create a tension with the rest of the building. It fits well with the simplicity of the religious architecture, while at the same time expressing the practical principles of modernist design.



F,2-12. Ground floor plan, Roman Catholic church, the Hague.

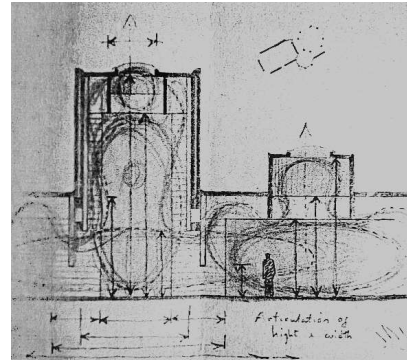


F,2-13. 4th Floor plan, Firminy Church. Firminy, France

Vertical space has been a recurring element in the architectural design of Le Corbusier's two Roman Catholic churches from 1950-1960. As can be seen in the diagram, the introduction of light through this vertical space is very practical in church architecture, and the same method is used in Van Eyck's Roman Catholic Church in The Hague. In fact, it is a recurring element in religious architecture, even in contemporary church design. In terms of spatial form, the Hague Catholic Church is simpler and more straightforward in terms of structure, composition and floor plan. The structural form used is a single-story concrete structure with brick masonry walls. The *Firminy Church*, on the other hand, is entirely concrete, which allows for the realization of complex blocks in the design. In addition, Le Corbusier's earlier works show a certain heroic tendency to use concrete to express architectural narratives, a characteristic that is also reflected in the *Firminy Church*, which is more complex than the Hague Catholic Church in terms of plan composition, with more chamfered corners and curved floor slabs, but is, of course, a multi-story building. In contrast, the layout of The Hague Catholic Church is much simpler (*due to budgetary constraints, partly*), but this simplicity also reflects the self-restraint expected of a religious building. The two churches express two post-1960 interpretations of sacred space in the Roman Catholic Church, one that adds a religious character to the previous modernist narrative, and the other that returns to the classical temple in form and uses it in a way that is more focused on the human experience.



F,2-14. Firminy church sketch.



F,2-15. Section diagram of the 'crypt' concept.

CHAPTER THREE

The Influence and the Aldo van Eyck's Concept as A Philosophy

- The Uniqueness and the consequence.

After practical analysis of the church, if we place the design of *Pastoor van Ars* among the period, we could notice the uniqueness of the building.

After 1960, Van Eyck designed many types of buildings, including churches that were introduced in previous chapters, and they addressed both spiritual needs and practical functions. This allowed him to gain more experience and the design methods he developed at this time were applied in many of his subsequent projects. In his 1965 *Sonsbeek pavilion* design, the interlocking square and round plan structure similar to that of the Catholic Church in The Hague was used again. As mentioned above, this return to geometric principles of composition is classical in nature. Van Eyck continued to explore a fusion of classical space and non-classical modernity in some of his next urban public projects, such as the winning proposal for the 1966 Town Hall Deventer competition. After completing his 1960 series of designs, Van Eyck gradually developed his own theory of 'poetic' architecture, which is reflected in his 'leaf' metaphor. This 'metaphor' first appeared in his design for the Children's Home in Amsterdam, which he explained in terms of 'the house as city, like the relationship between the leaf and the trunk of the tree'. An interesting thing about this topic is that at a later CIAM meeting (1962, *Abbaye Royaumont*), when Van Eyck tried to present his 'poetic' theory to the rest of the group, the other members questioned his statement more than they agreed with it, which led to a confrontational discussion that was not agreed upon until the end of the meeting. So, I think even if Van Eyck's work could be supported and approved, there are some theories he wrote that only he could understand well.

The Hague Catholic Church was Van Eyck's first actual church design, and this church and the competition proposal, completed a year later, are an expression of his direct, functional and humanistic design. This is unique among other Catholic churches of the period, for one thing, because Van Eyck's design highlights geometric features and simple spaces, thus responding well to early classical architecture, although this does not mean that he merely borrowed forms from classical buildings such as ancient temples. '*shelter from poverty*' and '*return to the human condition*'

spirit.

In this church, the abstract simplicity of its geometric aesthetic embodies a sculptural quality. There is no shortage of excellent Dutch church designs from this period, such as the *Adventskirche* (Aerdenhout, 1958), *Reformierte Kirche* (Nagele, 1960), and *Thomaskirche* (Amsterdam, 1966), but Van Eyck's design is not only spatially distinctive, it is also spiritually inherited from his earlier design of the Children's House in Amsterdam, and laid the foundation for his subsequent designs in the years to come. The church, Van Eyck's first actual design project after the 'Otterlo circle' of 1959, became the 'testing ground' for this philosophy. Van Eyck then went on to bring this philosophy into the CIAM discussions, and it gradually became one of the directions explored by the organization. In terms of broader implications, the church design serves as an important exploration of 'theory into practice', retaining a focus on the concrete and the everyday, making it unique from other Catholic church designs of the same period. After the church's completion in 1969, CIAM members also stated that the church was 'a place where the philosophy of Van Eyck can be seen'.

The Hague Catholic Church is a church design that successfully embodies the new style of the post-Vatican Council, which still attracts the attention of architects and architecture students, and the feedback from church members is very positive. The reasons for its success are both internal and external: on the one hand, the needs of the Church made the church less functional than traditional church architecture; on the other hand, Van Eyck found a concept that could be implemented from the beginning of the project, and combined with his own formal language developed at this time, the design of this church presents a church that reflects the classical colors and the spirit of modern life. The design of the church is a reflection of classical colors and the spirit of modern life. This is something rarely seen in other churches of the same period. Over the next 30 years, as more modern Roman Catholic churches appeared around the world, as architects became accustomed to the skillful use of new materials and structures in church architecture, and as the public became involved in worship, we can always look back at this outstanding work in The Hague and appreciate the beauty of its form, its inventiveness, and the hidden characteristics of its time.

NOTES

[1] The design process started already in summer 1963, before the contract was officially signed, also the first design was changed due to budget limit, although passed through the Hague government at first.

[2] Adolf Loos was mentioned here not as an active advocate of de-ornamentation, his idea was a precursor of the times which modern principles were applied.

IMAGE SOURCES

F,1-1 webpage wiki *Église Notre-Dame du Raincy*

F,1-2 webpage wiki Roman Catholic Architecture.

F,1-3 Van Eyck foundation website archive.

F,2-1 F,2-2 Architectuur en stedenbouw in Den Haag 1850-1940, pp12, pp14.

F,2-3 Historische atlas van Den Haag, pp62.

F,2-5 Van Eyck foundation website archive.

F,2-6 F,2-8 F,2-9 F,2-11 F,2-15 Lotus International 1976 Issue 9.

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