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MYSTICISM AND SYMBOLISM IN SACRAL SPACE

MISTYCYZM I SYMBOLIZM W ŚWIĄTYNI

Abstract

Contradictions in the perception of sacred space and reading the symbolism of its content are considered. An attempt is also made to adapt the principles of modernism to the needs of the formation of sacred space. In which, after the suspension of historical knowledge, the essence of the phenomenon under study is sought, which is understood as its invariable feature. Religion, art, science, language are presented as forms of human thinking about reality with forms of epistemologically understandable symbol. The necessity to take into account the relationship between certain forms and the messages that are transmitted through them in the formation of sacred space is emphasized. Symbols pointing out not certain sacred reality, but certain intellectual tendencies, social situations or expressions of culture are singled out. Detection results of the study can be an application tool for using the language of symbolism to organize the sacred spaces of modern temples.

Keywords: sacral space, symbolism, architecture, temple, religion, art

Streszczenie

Rozważane są sprzeczności w postrzeganiu przestrzeni sakralnej i odczytywaniu symboliki jej treści. Podejmowana jest także próba dostosowania zasad modernizmu do potrzeb kształtowania przestrzeni sakralnej, w której po zawieszeniu wiedzy historycznej poszukuje się istoty badanego zjawiska, rozumianej jako jego niezmienna cecha. Religia, sztuka, nauka, język są przedstawiane jako formy ludzkiego myślenia o rzeczywistości za pomocą form zrozumiałego epistemologicznie symbolu. Podkreśla się konieczność uwzględnienia relacji między pewnymi formami a przekazami, które są przez nieprzekazywane w formowaniu przestrzeni sakralnej. Wyróżnia się symbole wskazujące nie na pewną rzeczywistość sakralną, ale na pewne tendencje intelektualne, sytuacje społeczne czy przejawy kultury. Wyniki badań mogą być narzędziem aplikacyjnym do wykorzystania języka symboliki do organizowania przestrzeni sakralnych współczesnych świątyń.

Słowa kluczowe: przestrzeń sakralna, symbolizm, architektura, świątynia, religia, sztuka.

1. INTRODUCTION

Although in Western culture from the beginning of Christianity doubts were regularly expressed as to the role of art in religious worship (for example, for Tertullian, the work of artists was *devilish work*, and the regulations on the organization of Cistercian monasteries of 1138, which followed almost a millennium later, forbade the use of any kind in churches, paintings or sculptures), it was common practice to recognize the role of art in bringing people closer to God. There were also ambiguous opinions about the origin of beauty and even for St. Thomas, it was not always transcendent and metaphysical in nature, but also in this case the view that God is the source of all visible beauty was much more often formulated.

Already Clement from Alexandria in the third century wrote that “God is the cause of all that is beautiful.”¹

In later times, it is impossible to provide an equally extensive description of symbolic meanings, and the role of a religious symbol in culture began to decline. This does not mean marginalizing the meaning of other kinds of symbols. In modernism, at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the concept of a symbol inspired by Hegelian thought played an enormous role, and later the epistemological concept of a symbol by Ernst Cassirer, inspired by neo-kantism. Between the three concepts of symbol mentioned here (“Traditional”, “Hegel” and “Cassirer”), which in the 20th century had almost the same impact on the development of understanding of the symbol.²

In the first of these theories, the source of symbols is a transcendent being that manifests itself in the visible world. The cosmos, the natural world, human history, all reality is symbolic, it is a kind of hieroglyph with which God writes to man. The role of man is to read the revealed symbols and write them in language, myths or art in a way that is accessible to human resources. The symbolic values of art, however, are not only secondary to the real symbols, because God can also reveal himself in this particular human activity, which is artistic creativity. Art is like *second nature* and an area in which human activity is supported by God.

The second type of symbols occurs when we perceive in certain visible shapes of objects an expression of a more general situation, the expression of a certain type of attitudes or collective beliefs.

Symbols of this kind do not indicate sacred reality, but certain intellectual tendencies, social situations, or expressions of culture. Characteristic for these symbols is their spontaneity, the pressure of more general collective beliefs or aspirations. These symbols organize the ideas of human collectivities about their aspirations, features or the current fate. They are usually dominated by admiration or adoration over certain aspects of the development of civilization or culture. Avant-garde modernism in architecture seems to be one of the most suggestive incarnations of this very variety of contemporary symbolism. The starting point was the need to achieve harmony between the character of the epoch and the forms of art, a postulate resulting from the doctrine of historicism, which assumes the existence of internal correspondence between various manifestations of culture of a given time, agreement reaching its essential, spiritual foundations. Although it was not formulated with full literalness at the time, these ideological determinants can be taken as rationality, secular character, political postulates of the French revolution, and moreover – considered as a result of the occurrence of these determinants – development of culture and technology. The objects of technology were seen as the embodiment of dreams of a *brave new world*, which was the reason why they became models for works of architecture. When the house was described as *a machine for living in*, then the church building became something like a *vessel for contemplation*. Like other types of buildings, the body of the church was deprived of external features that allowed it to be assigned sacred functions, and in terms of the forms used, it was equated with other public buildings. However, the lack of traditional distinguishing features did not mean

¹ C. Wąs, *Symbolika czasu w architekturze sakralnej* [in:] E. Przybył (ed.), *Religia wobec historii, historia wobec religii*, Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos, Kraków 2006, pp. 437–447.

² W.H. Jordy, *The symbolic essence of modern European architecture of the twenties and its continuing influence*, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 1963, no. 22(3), pp. 177–187.

that the building had little *eloquence*. Both for the architect and the average viewer, modern churches illustrate the simplicity and functionality of technical objects and the search for the identity of modern man in products of technological origin. Although in the fascination with the products of advanced technologies one can also notice a certain bias towards the future, contemporary man looks at himself in his own products, identifies with them and abandons the tensions accompanying the traditional experience of history.³

The third theory recognizes the creator of symbols as a man who directs his cognitive activity towards the visible reality and the presumed transcendent reality. Man – according to the perceptions of neo-Kantism – unable to reach objects directly, he creates ideas about them, known as symbols. In Cassirer's theory, symbols are the proper world of man, closer to him than real reality. Religion, art, science, language are forms of human thinking about reality, forms of an epistemologically understood symbol. It was this theory that dominated the twentieth-century humanities, and it inspired artists to believe that they had a legitimate role as symbol creators. Consciously produced symbols can also be added to this group of symbolic forms, including those based on individual invention metaphors and allegories requiring collective agreement, especially when they concern general issues of human existence. Such creations are not fully independent and their *vitality* is based on updating existing myths and symbolic structures, as if going beyond the existing set was impossible.

The often-expressed view that *modernism in architecture is essentially asymbolical* is therefore an unsustainable thesis.⁴

The modernist sacred architecture contained symbolism, but in fact contradicting traditional symbolism, while expressing the content of modernism understood as the ideology of secularism, rationality and the cult of technology. Despite this situation, modernism was considered appropriate for sacred architecture. Its supporters revealed themselves most often by making demands that the design of churches should reflect the present through of the use of modern forms, materials and technologies. Failure to follow this instruction was to threaten the loss of the vitality manifested by secular architecture by sacred architecture, and consequently contribute to lowering the importance of religion for modern man. Instead of thinking *sub specie aeternitatis*, one had to strive to be *the child of the age*. The architectural symbolism that followed has evolved from symbolizing the world of eternity to symbolizing the world of the present. In the narrower circle of modernists, as represented by the aforementioned Peter Hammond, the doctrine of liturgical functionalism prevailed, assuming that "if the decay of the church is subordinated to an appropriate theological program and if the building is an honest structure, free from imitation and irrelevant ornamentation, then be left alone."⁵

The symbol was supposed to follow the function. Apart from such a basic contradiction as the incompatibility of Christian ideas with the natural inclinations of people and the visible world in general, the present day has deepened this gap, including many areligious ideas also in art. The attempt to adapt art originating from sources contrary to the ideas of Christianity for the needs of sacred architecture was burdened with great difficulties. On the other hand, the mission of Christianity has been from the beginning to Christianize all human activities

³ H. Marcuse, *Człowiek jednowymiarowy. Badania nad ideologią rozwiniętego społeczeństwa przemysłowego*, PWN, Warszawa 1991, pp. 63–78.

⁴ S.J. Schloeder, *Architecture in Communion. Implementing the Second Vatican Council through Liturgy and Architecture*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1998, pp. 44–59.

⁵ P. Hammond, *Liturgy and Architecture*, Barrie and Rockliff, London 1960, pp. 37–47.

and, metaphorically speaking, to try to bring back all the escaped sheep. One of the forms of such efforts was the activity of the Dominican Pierre Marie-Alain Couturier, who encouraged Henri Matisse, Jean Cocteau, Fernand Leger and many other French artists, who generally declared themselves to be atheists, to cooperate in the creation of churches.⁶

2. TENDENCY OF USING MYSTICISM AND SYMBOLISM OF THE CREATION IN SHAPING SACRAL ARCHITECTURE OF THE 20TH CENTURY

The beginning of the 20th century was full of numerous phenomena that violated the traditional social order. Progressive industrialization brought crowds of people to the cities who torn from their environments – they found it hard to find themselves in their new surroundings. Social tensions additionally made them susceptible to various ideological influences. Institutional churches have struggled to cope with the new challenges, especially social radicalism, rationalism and secularization. National tensions began to play an increasingly important role in the midst of social tensions. After all, World War I left a disappointment with bourgeois values and politics. The disintegration or weakening of many traditional institutions created a need for reintegration, but in line with new ideas. One of the expressions of this phenomenon was the popularity of neogothic movements, especially the anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner. However, the most serious sources of regaining a sense of community were political religions: socialism and communism. Renewal movements also appeared in the Catholic Church, including the most famous so-called liturgical reform movement. Many of these ideas at the beginning of the 20th century had a direct impact on the architecture created at that time. In some architectural environments, an important role has started to be played by the conviction that the lost sense of unity can be rebuilt if one reaches deeper sources of reality.⁷

There are at least three trends in which architecture was supposed to be a source of repairing the existing situation:

1. The first of these can be described as *anthroposophical*. It is represented by the architectural theories of Rudolf Steiner, buildings in Dornach (Goetheum I and II) and by the statements and designs of architects in which they expressed their faith in the magical power of certain numbers, figures (like a pentagram) and shapes (especially stars, mountains and crystal).

2. The second stream can be called the *cult of the community trend*. A certain group of needs for the renewal of unity in society was accompanied by a search for deeper patterns, which were found, inter alia, in the forces that bind religious communities together or in the organization of society that once resulted in the construction of Gothic cathedrals. The sought

⁶ A. Christ-Janer, M.M. Foley, *Modern Church Architecture. A guide to the form and spirit of 20th century religious buildings*, McGraw-Hill, New York 1962, pp. 81–85; E. Widder, *Europäische Kirchenkunst der Gegenwart. Architektur, Malerei und Plastik*, Oberösterreichischer Landesverlag, Linz 1968, pp. 131–132; H. Matisse, P.M.A. Couturier, L.B. Rayssiguier, *The Vence Chapel: The archive of creation*, M. Billot (ed.), Menil Foundation, Houston 1999, pp. 34–48.

⁷ L.R. Gnatiuk, *Contradictions in the Formation of the Artistic Image of Sacred Space in XX Century Architecture*, Current Problems of Architecture and Urban Planning, 2020, no. 56, pp. 17–31. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32347/2077-3455.2020.56.17-31>

unity referred either to superclass ideas (of people or nation) or to the idea of social justice and social equality of classes (as in the then socialism). Each of these two groups of ideas corresponded to the implemented or designed buildings: the first – Max Berg's Centennial Hall, the temple of folk unity, the second – Otto Bartning's Sternkirche (according to some *socialist cathedral*) and the activity of Bauhaus in the early period.

3. The third trend is the Catholic reform, which also had its counterparts in Protestant denominations. The liturgical reform, connected with over-formalization, it had an immediate response in the design of churches, including the design of the Circumstantens Church by Weber and Böhm⁸ and the completed church of St. Engelbert in the Riehl district of Cologne (1930, Dominikus Böhm).⁹

The anthroposophical theory of architecture assumed that the world and man are permeated by various types of spiritual forces which, through the shapes taken by the objects of the visible world, could be strengthened or weakened. An architect should be able to sense these forces both those flowing from the outside (from the environment, from the universe) and those that will flow from people using a given building – and harmonize them by using specific forms in the building. This harmony of forms should also be adequate to the type of activity with which the object will be filled. The forms were used to facilitate the coexistence of people using the building, but also to enable them to learn about the principles of the *higher world*.¹⁰

There was no single way to invent the right forms, but it was accepted to follow the example of living organisms or to use recognized mathematical proportions. Such principles meant that the anthroposophical temple, which was the Goetheanum II in Dornach near Basel, had no counterpart in the architecture of that time and resembled a mushroom, growth or crustacean (Ill. 1). At the same time, however, Steiner originally planned to base some of its proportions on the dimensions of Solomon's temple, and the two buttresses seemingly only supporting the audience, like overhead roots, also have their source in the columns of Jakin and Boaz standing in front of this ancient building.

Steiner theories had a very strong influence on the architects of German expressionism and the church architecture they created.

The conviction about the mystical power inherent in certain shapes can be found in Otto Bartning's ideas of basing the church plan on the shape of a star.

The regularity of this figure also stimulated the use of magic numbers, as indicated by Bruno Taut's comment:

Visitors of the temple will be filled with the joy flowing from architecture that will extract from their soul all human elements and transform it into a theophoric vessel. The building is a reflection and greeting of the stars: sacred numbers 3 and 7 are inscribed in its plan, which united it [...] the illumination originates from the glass domes separating the inside from the outside [...] it shines far away like a star. And it makes sounds like a bell.¹¹

⁸ D. Prelovsek, *Plečnikova sakralna umetnost*, Koper, Ognjsce 1999; D. Prelovsek, *Josef Plečnik 1872–1957. Architectura perennis*, Residenz Verlag, Salzburg 1992; R. Klein, *Josef Plečnik*, Akadémiai K., Budapest 1992; V. Šlapeta, *Competing ideas in Czechoslovakian architecture* [in:] W. Leśnikowski (ed.), *East European modernism*, Rizzoli, New York 1996, pp. 37–55.

⁹ P. Krečič, *Josef Plečnik. Architect, 1872–1957: The Complete Works*, Whitney Library of Design, New York 1993, pp. 31–52.

¹⁰ W. Pehnt, *Die Architektur des Expressionismus*, Verlag Gerd Hatje, Ostfildern 1998, pp. 13–32.

¹¹ E. Heathcote, I. Spens, *Church builders*, Academy Editions, Chichester 1997, pp. 98–101.



- Ill. 1. Rudolf Steiner, Goetheanum II, 1924–1928, Dornach. Photo by the author.
 Ill. 2. Hans Poelzig, project of a pilgrimage chapel.
 Ill. 3. Gottfried Böhm, Neviges Church, 1963–1968. Photo by the author.



Ill. 4. Marek Budzynski, design of the Temple of Divine Providence, 2000.

Ill. 5. Timo and Tuomo Suomalainen, Tempelpiaukio Church, 1968–1969, Helsinki. Photo by the author.

Indeed, the numbers cited by Taut found their way into the structure of the building: the inner space is made up of seven bays, and three pillars are placed between the bays. References were also made to the old tradition of the *sacred mountains*, additionally associated with the crystal structure suspected of special power. Among the *crystal mountains* that filled the expressionist sketchbooks, the design of the pilgrimage chapel by Hans Poelzig (Ill. 2). After World War II, the son of Dominikus Böhm, Gottfried, returned to the idea of a church in the shape of a mountain in his best-known work, the pilgrimage church in Neviges, which belongs to the neo-expressionist brutalism (Ill. 3).¹² The ideas of the expressionists return to

¹² D. Konstantynów, R. Pasieczny, P. Paszkiewicz (eds.), *Nacjonalizm w sztuce i historii sztuki 1789–1950*, Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Warszawa 1998, pp. 55–70; W. Pehnt, *Gottfried Böhm*, Birkhäuser Verlag, Basel–Berlin–Boston 1999, pp. 75–79; Werner Finke, *Die Wallfahrtskirche von*

the postmodern project of the Temple of Divine Providence in Warsaw by Marek Budzynski, linking the mound with a crystal (Ill. 4).¹³

The temple was placed here inside the mountain, which reminds you that the mystic of the depth is well expressed through the mystic of the underworld. In this way, the values of faith are presented as mysterious, hidden values that lie beyond the realm of everyday life. Protestants are no strangers to this treatment of the world of religion, because the most famous underground temple of the 20th century, carved as a grotto above, is the Temppeli-aukio Church in Helsinki by Timo and Tuomo Suomalainen (Ill. 5).¹⁴

All these buildings are, to some extent, gnostic, as they surround the faith with an aura of secret, unofficial and even forbidden knowledge. The mysterious nature of connecting people in society is close to the types of bonds that bind religious communities. This view became the reason for the construction of buildings in which the secular ceremonies, theatrical and musical performances held for large numbers of people were aimed – as during religious ceremonies – to create a sense of community. The best example of this type of building is the *Centennial Hall* (Jahrhunderthalle) in Wrocław by Max Berg (Ill. 6).

Erected to commemorate the publication of the proclamation *An Mein Volk*, an important event in the history of gaining national awareness by Germans, and inaugurated with a great theatrical performance showing the formation of the German nation, it is the most expressive manifestation of *Temple of popular unity*. The description of the Centennial Hall after World War II as the *People's Hall* indicates the continuation of the German concepts of elevating the people in the new political system. Its form was based on reflections on many important temple buildings – from Babylonian ziggurats, through the Byzantine church Hagia Sophia and Gothic cathedrals, to the early Baroque St. Peter cathedral in Rome. The forms of some buildings or the ways of organizing their interiors allow us to conclude that the ideas of the rebirth of social unity sometimes resulted from a combination of very different elements, for example, the Christian religion and non-political socialism.

The proof can be found in the Star Church (Sternkirche) of Bartning: the location of the altar in the very center of the building (only seemingly in line with the postulates of the theologians of the liturgical reform movement) seems too mechanical, excessively democratizing and equalizing the participants of the service (Ill. 7). Amphitheatrically arranged benches for the faithful bring the atmosphere of a tribal rally or religious gathering of a completely new kind.

Not only the Church as a social organization, but also the church as a building (especially the Gothic cathedral) became at the beginning of the 20th century a model of proper social organization.¹⁵ Some architectural circles have adopted the erroneous but moving belief that

Neviges. Zum 80. Geburtstag des Architekten Gottfried Böhm, Das Münster, 1999, 52(4), pp. 345–352; A. Janhsen-Vukicevic, *Gottfried Böhm Wallfahrtskirche in Neviges*, Positionen, 1998, no. 2, <http://www.theo.tu-cottbus.de/wolke/x-positionen/Janhsen/janhsen.html> (access: 26.04.2021); W.J. Stock (ed.), *Europäischer Kirchenbau 1950–2000*, Prestel, München 2003, pp. 142–145; K. Kiem, *Vielsichtiger Betonfelsen. Die Wallfahrtskirche in Neviges* [in:] W. Voigt (ed.), *Gottfried Böhm*, Jovis, Berlin 2006, pp. 60–79.

¹³ E. Rozwadowska, *Wybralem rozwiqzanie nowatorskie. Rozmowa z Ksiqdzem Kardynałem Józefem Glempem*, Prymasem Polski, Architektura-murator 2000, no. 7, pp. 10–11.

¹⁴ R. Gieselmann, *Contemporary church architecture*, Thames and Hudson, London 1972, pp. 109–111; E. Heathcote, I. Spens, *op. cit.*, pp. 98–101; S. Jetsonen, J. Jetsonen, *Sacral Space. Modern Finnish Architecture*, Building Information, Helsinki 2003, pp. 76–85; W.J. Stock (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 280–281.

¹⁵ M. Bushart, *Der Geist der Gotik und die expressionistische Kunst. Kunstgeschichte und Kunsttheorie 1911–1925*, Schreiber, München 1990, pp. 183–195.

a gothic cathedral is the result of a kind of teamwork in which an outstanding individual and a craftsman work together on a work which, in consequence, becomes the work of a community rather than of individuals.

Thus, the road to a good society leads through the church, in which each person “[...] will consciously or unconsciously sink his ego into a great social crucible, in the hope that he will manage to connect his voice with a thousand other voices uttering the same words, but also to join a thousand tongues and a thousand lips with your cry of deep despair” (Otto Bartning).¹⁶ This way of thinking about the Gothic cathedral became a model for establishing the Bauhaus, a school of architects, artists and craftsmen, in which – as in the medieval cathedral roof – masters and students were to work together, and future pupils should be able to act in the spirit of the common good. The Gothic cathedral therefore returned as a form of a communitarian association of artists. Therefore, when the Bauhaus announced its manifest in 1919, its cover was decorated with an image of a Gothic cathedral by Lyonel Feininger (Ill. 8).¹⁷ Earlier, Gothic typography was used to decorate the first edition of the Communist Manifest. In addition to using various religious traditions for political or artistic purposes, at the beginning of the 20th century we are also dealing with attempts to revive the spirit of traditional Christian churches and adapt them to many new elements of social reality. In the new tendencies in Catholicism, which arose on the margins of the official life of the Church, the ideas of returning to the values of Christianity in the time of Christ were an important component and the first centuries of the development of this religion.

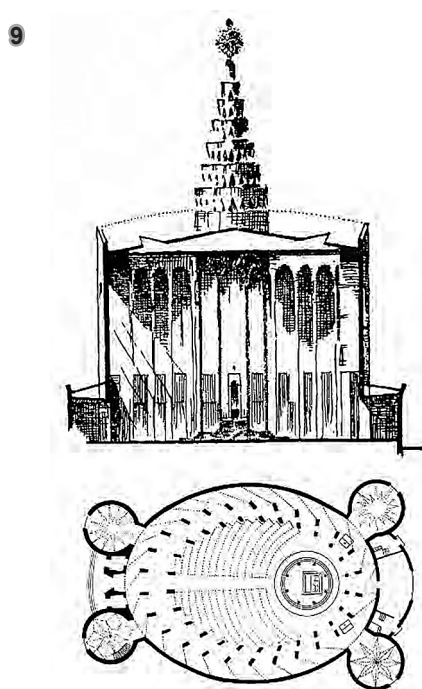
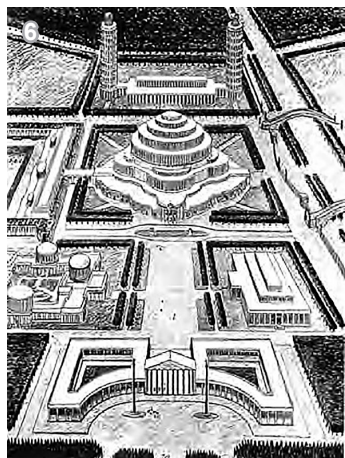
These ideas, directly and indirectly, assumed the rejection of a large part of the hitherto existing traditions. This return to the more or less imaginary principles of the early Christians was in many ways similar to avant-garde modernism, with its typical rejection of history and focusing on fundamental phenomena. However, it is probably not possible to unequivocally assess whether the above-mentioned tendencies are more about a return to tradition or a break with tradition. In this unstable balance there are also projects and buildings created among architects who are close to the liturgical reform movement. Designed by Böhm and Weber in 1922, the Circumstantes church was founded on an ellipse plan, brought the altar closer to the center of the church and surrounded it with pews for the faithful (which significantly democratized the course of the mass), but at the same time the altar was spectacularly elevated, and the single-space nave was surrounded by a double row pillars dramatizing the inner space (Ill. 9).

In 1930, Böhm built the Church of St. Engelbert, based on similar principles (Ill. 10–11).¹⁸ This time the building was laid out on a circular plan, the altar was again moderately brought closer to the faithful (without breaking a certain separation), but the clear interior did not lose the character of a space of exceptional value. The sacred character of the interior was created mainly by double parabolic arches, swollen with tension and emphasized at the top with openings through which light is poured in, creating strong contrasts of light and shadow. The interior resembles Gothic with its perpendicularism and the ribs of the arches. Round windows, parabolic arches and chiaroscuro contrasts bring to mind Romanesque or Byzantine buildings.

¹⁶ E. Heathcote, I. Spens, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

¹⁷ B.M. Lane, *Memory, Myth and Ideas of Community in Modern German and Scandinavian Architecture*, <http://www.brynmawr.edu/emeritus/lane.html> (access: 26.04.2021).

¹⁸ K. James-Chakraborty, *German Architecture for a Mass Audience*, Routledge, London–New York 2000, pp. 65–69.



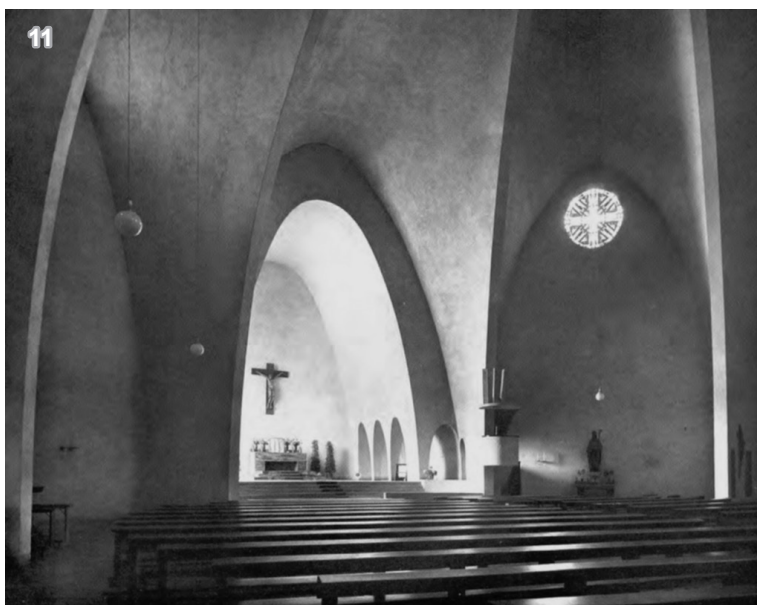
III. 6. Max Berg, Hans Poelzig, Centennial Hall and Exhibition Grounds, project, 1912.

III. 7. Otto Bartning, Sternkirche project, 1921–1922.

III. 8. Lyonel Feininger, cover of "Programm des Staatlichen Bauhauses Weimar", 1919.

III. 9. Dominikus Böhm, Martin Weber, Circumstantes Church design, 1923.

All old forms, however, have undergone such a strong purification that the building fully belongs to modernism, other Böhm buildings also use forms belonging to ancient architectural traditions (mainly Romanism and Gothic), but at the same time – usually considered as opposing – forms of avant-garde modernism.



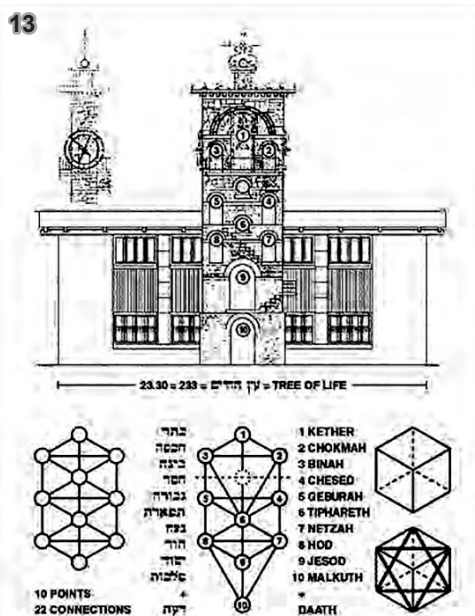
Ill. 10–11. Dominikus Böhm, Church of St. Engelbert, 1930, Cologne. Photo by the author.

The most disturbing, however, is the Church of St. Michael in Barje, believed to be based on Kabbalistic and Gnostic schemes and calculations (Ill. 12–13).¹⁹

Although it seems unlikely that this serious and religious master could have reached for such unofficial models, this kind of interpretation reflects well the spiritual atmosphere in which the strange forms of this building were born. The two free-standing columns preceding the church, referring to the columns of Solomon's temple, indicate that this work refers

¹⁹ morphys, *A brief conversation with Archangel Michael*, <http://www.aiwaz.net/Plecnik/Michael> (access: 26.04.2021).

to symbolism rarely used in official Christianity. Then, the unusual shape and arrangement of the holes in the tower seem close to the Kabbalistic scheme of the so-called tree of life. Also, further analyses could show the convergence of the basic dimensions of the building with the principles of gematria.²⁰



Ill. 12. Jože Plečnik, the Church of St. Michael in Barje, 1937–1939. Photo by the author.

Ill. 13. Kabbalistic schemes and the composition of the facade of the Church of St. Michael in Barje.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Mysticism and symbolism in the creation of sacred space have long been used as a facilitator that helps to stop, pause, meditate about the reality around us, reality we would like to see, or reality which the architect wants us to see.

The use of such slightly daily patterns is not, however, completely surprising, when the architect's faith, deepened by reading, is taken into account, and thus the motivated approach to the tasks of architecture.

The hitherto existing human abilities to transcend their own limitations should be maintained (especially in the world of exaggerated emphasis in contemporary societies on the average utility and economy of the means used), because the human ability to create art is rooted in the acts of combining human and divine being.

²⁰ L.R. Gnatiuk, *The role of art and symbol in the formation of sacred space*, Current Problems of Architecture and Urban Planning, 2021, no. 58, pp. 26–42. DOI: 10.32347/2077–3455.2020.58.32–47

Art offered to God is born of the wealth that comes from communing with God. The peculiar uselessness and the phenomenon of excess inherent in art changes the shape of human existence.

If we were to live in a world where everything is only useful and there is nothing to be happy about without first tying it to a specific goal, where there is science, and there is no trace of a philosophical understanding of all life and not of poetry and music, then one could only despair.

Being walled up in a desacralized space and having no possibility of escaping from the *here and now*, one loses the possibility of entering the space of being, not through philosophical reflection, but during the parade of life.

Visitors of the temple should feel themselves in space not entirely earthly and not entirely heavenly, but in a space, which is a mediator. That is one of the main purposes of temples. And to recreate such a space, all means must be used: the ritual, the architecture, mysticism and symbolism.

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