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TECHNOLOGY IN SACRAL ARCHITECTURE – AN OPPORTUNITY OR AN IMPASSE? SELECTED ISSUES BASED ON THE EXAMPLE OF POST-CONCILIAR PROJECTS

TECHNIKA W ARCHITEKTURZE SAKRALNEJ – SZANSA CZY IMPAS? WYBRANE ZAGADNIENIA NA PRZYKŁADZIE POSOBOROWYCH PROJEKTÓW

Abstract

The article addresses the issue of technology in sacral architecture. It analyzes the influence of technology on contemporary buildings serving this purpose. It cites documents and the official position of the Church towards its development as well. Examples of the use of technical tools or technology in architecture have been presented on the examples of post-conciliar sacral projects. The results of the analyses indicate that the benefits stemming from technology are undeniable, but their inept use may carry numerous threats such as, i.a., dehumanization, lack of acceptance of architecture by the congregation, separation of architecture from existential depth in favor of superficiality.

Keywords: opportunities, sacral architecture, technology, threats

Streszczenie

Artykuł porusza zagadnienie techniki w architekturze sakralnej, poddając analizie jej wpływ na współczesne budowle o tym przeznaczeniu oraz przywołując dokumenty i oficjalne stanowisko Kościoła wobec jej rozwoju. Przykłady zastosowań narzędzi techniki czy technologii w architekturze zostały zaprezentowane na podstawie posoborowych realizacji sakralnych. Wynik analiz wskazuje, że dobrodziejstwa wynikające z techniki są niezaprzeczalne, lecz ich nieumiejętne stosowanie może nieść wiele zagrożeń, takich jak m.in. dehumanizacja, brak akceptacji architektury przez wiernych, oderwanie architektury od egzystencjalnej głębi na rzecz powierzchowności.

Słowa kluczowe: szanse, architektura sakralna, technika, technologia, zagrożenia

1. INTRODUCTION. TRANSCENDING LIMITATIONS

Contemporary technology and techniques available to architects have liberated them almost completely from the material and structural limitations that their predecessors faced. They can choose from a variety of tools that were unknown in the recent past, styles from previous

eras, as well as contemporary trends. They are able to design churches, temples, cathedrals, or chapels with completely new, previously unheard of forms or plans, and use innovative materials. Apart from certain limitations (financial, conservation, or those resulting from local law, etc.), it is assumed that only the creator's imagination is an obstacle to their creation.

The art of erecting buildings (including those for religious purposes) has for centuries reflected the spirit of the prevailing era. It responds to the social and civilizational changes taking place, or in the ways of experiencing faith. It is assumed that art, and consequently profound architecture, is a carrier of prevailing values and – as the poet Zagajewski put it – “grows from the deepest admiration for the world, visible and invisible.”¹ Since the dawn of time, man has been tempted – which is also the driving force of progress – to build bolder, higher, deeper, more extensively... “Every age must discover and express the essence [...] anew”² – wrote theologian Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI).

Undoubtedly, we owe the development of architecture to technical development – and consequently the development of technology, construction, or materials science. There have been moments throughout history when the techniques and tools used in sacred buildings were pioneering and influenced the style of a given era.³ The current influence of the Roman Catholic Church on the development of technology and design trends in the world of art and architecture seems negligible. Nevertheless, over the last decades, in the designs of new churches, bold solutions have emerged, which are gaining recognition. On the other hand, giving a dominant role and priority to technology in architecture can carry many risks.

2. THE CHURCH VS. TECHNOLOGY

With the expansion of the influence of Enlightenment ideas onto Western culture, the Church adopted a cautious position towards the development of technology and art. This was influenced by the increasing importance of rationalist and empiricist tendencies, as well as the further industrial revolution and industrialization. “Enlightenment pushed faith into a kind of intellectual and even social ghetto. Contemporary culture turned away from the faith and trod another path, so that faith took flight in historicism, the copying of the past, or else attempted to adapt, or lost itself in resignation and cultural abstinence”⁴ – in such words did Ratzinger describe this phenomenon. As he notes, this led to a new iconoclasm, a crisis of sacred art and church art. As a result, the first techniques of using cast iron (late 18th century), and later reinforced concrete (turn of the 19th/20th century) in sacral buildings were dressed in historicizing costumes.⁵

¹ A. Zagajewski, *W cudzym pięknie*, Wydawnictwo a5, Kraków 2000, p. 32 (English translation from Polish by B. Skrzyszewska).

² J. Ratzinger, *The spirit of liturgy*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2018, p. 95.

³ Among the numerous innovative ideas, later replicated many times, one can mention the pendentive dome – first used in the majestic basilica of Hagia Sophia (now Istanbul, Turkey), designed by Anthemios of Tralles and Isidore of Miletus.

⁴ J. Ratzinger, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

⁵ It is assumed that the first Christian place of prayer to use cast iron (in the form of pillars) was the Church of St. Chad in Shrewsbury (1790–1792, Great Britain) designed by George Steuart, and reinforced concrete in the Church of St. John in Montmartre (1894–1904) in Paris designed by Joseph-Eugène Anatole de Baudot. See M.D. Charlesworth, *St. Chad's Church, Shrewsbury*, R.J.L.

In the first half of the 20th century, voices accepting development and changes in the previously mentioned fields were becoming increasingly louder. “What we need is not less technology but more, [...] more ‘human’ technology,” wrote Guardini. Pope Paul VI appealed for a return to friendly relationship between the Church and artists and for an end to the “divorce” between art and the sacred. Speaking to artists in the Sistine Chapel in 1964, he beat his chest: “[...] we have imposed imitation as the first rule upon you [artists], on you who are creators, always full of life, gushing with a thousand ideas and a thousand new things.”⁷ However, it should be borne in mind that the aforementioned dialogue with representatives of the art world was not completely broken off. For example, in the first half of the 20th century, Dominicans Fr. Pierre Marie-Alain Couturier OP and Fr. Pie-Raymond Régamey OP⁸ invited such personalities of the world of avant-garde art and architecture as Henri Matisse, Jean Cocteau, Marc Chagall, Georges Braque, and Le Corbusier to collaborate on religious buildings. The last of them became the author of an innovative concept in the spirit of brutalism – the monastery of Sainte Marie de La Tourette in Eveux (1956–1960, France).

It was only in later documents, which were the fruit of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), that bolder provisions regarding progress, technology, art and architecture as well as the Church’s position towards them were included. One of the most important is the pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world, *Gaudium et Spes* by Paul VI. In point 64, he emphasized that it was necessary to support “technical progress, an inventive spirit [...]: in a word, all that elements making for such development”, however, the basic goal is to serve man “with regard for the full range of his material needs and the demands of his intellectual, moral, spiritual and religious life.”⁹ In another post-conciliar document – the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium* – there was a notation emphasizing that the Church allowed artistic forms of every era, and that contemporary art from all nations and regions could develop freely within it.¹⁰ The document also touches on the subject of the sphere of designing liturgical equipment, allowing for “changes in materials, style and ornamentation prompted by the progress of the technical arts with the passage of

Smith & Associates, Much Wenlock 1997 [after:] C. Wąs, *Antynomie współczesnej architektury sakralnej*, Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu, Wrocław 2008, p. 136; K. Frampton, J. Cava (eds.), *Studies in tectonic culture. The poetics of construction in nineteenth and twentieth century*, Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in Fine Arts, The MIT Press, Chicago, Cambridge, London 1995, pp. 54–56 [after:] *Ibidem*, pp. 142–143.

⁶ R. Guardini, *Letters from Lake Como: Explorations on technology and the human race*, Eerdmans Publishing Company, Cambridge 1994, p. 83.

⁷ Paul VI (G.B.E.A.M. Montini), “Artists’ Mass” in the Sistine Chapel, Vatican, 7.05.1964, <https://stpatrikstudios.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/paul-vi-homily-at-artists-mass-in-the-sistine-chapel-may-1964.pdf> (access: 1.06.2024).

⁸ The Dominicans, Fr. Couturier OP and Fr. Régamey OP, were active promoters of the rapprochement between modern art and the Church. They invited outstanding representatives of the fine arts, often non-believers or people of other denominations, to collaborate. The aforementioned postulates appeared on the pages of the French monthly they published entitled “L’Art Sacré”, and their flagship project was the interior design of the church of Notre-Dame de Toute Grâce du Plateau in Assy. See K. Czerni, *Nowosielski – sztuka sakralna. Lourdes, Biały Bór, zbiory prywatne*, Fundacja Akeda, Kraków 2023, pp. 28–33; and C. Wąs, *op. cit.*, pp. 42, 227.

⁹ Paul VI (G.B.E.A.M. Montini), *Gaudium et spes*, Rome 7.12.1965, item 64.

¹⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium*, item 123.

time.”¹¹ The issue of technology and its influence on sacred architecture was also mentioned by John Paul II just under three decades later in his famous *Letter to Artists*.¹²

The latest church documents also show a continuation of the chosen attitude towards the development of architecture, technology and art. And it was in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* – a regulation containing, among other things, norms concerning the outline of the liturgy, or the principles of arranging and decorating the interior of a church – that the following entry appeared: “[...] The Church constantly seeks the noble assistance of the arts and admits the artistic expressions of all peoples and regions. In fact, [...] also she strives to promote new works of art that are in harmony with the character of each successive age.”¹³

Declaratively, the Church presents an open position towards the development of technology. It emphasizes that it can help to build an atmosphere of the sacred, but it should be used in the spirit of humanism, i.e. in a way that is geared towards a man and always with him in mind.

3. THE BRILLIANCE OF TECHNOLOGY

The basic advantages of the influence of technology on sacral architecture include the possibility of using increasingly bold construction solutions and introducing more and more light into the interiors of churches.¹⁴ Contemporary examples of that include the Cathedral of Our Lady of Aparecida in Brasília (1958–1970, Brazil) designed by Oscar Niemeyer (Ill. 1). When starting the design work, the author mentioned that the building “should be an example of modern technology. I recalled old cathedrals from the past, each of which expressed the progress of a given era [...], based on large spans, bold structures, richly decorated facades and interiors.”¹⁵ The innovative form that was implemented combines the soaring Gothic style with the harmony of Renaissance churches with a central layout. It is created by sixteen white, concentrically arranged ribs. Between them, a transparent structure resembling a tent flysheet was stretched, through which light penetrates the interior. The original shape of the cathedral is a prelude to its unique interior. The single-space, circular nave can accommodate

¹¹ *Ibidem*, item 122.

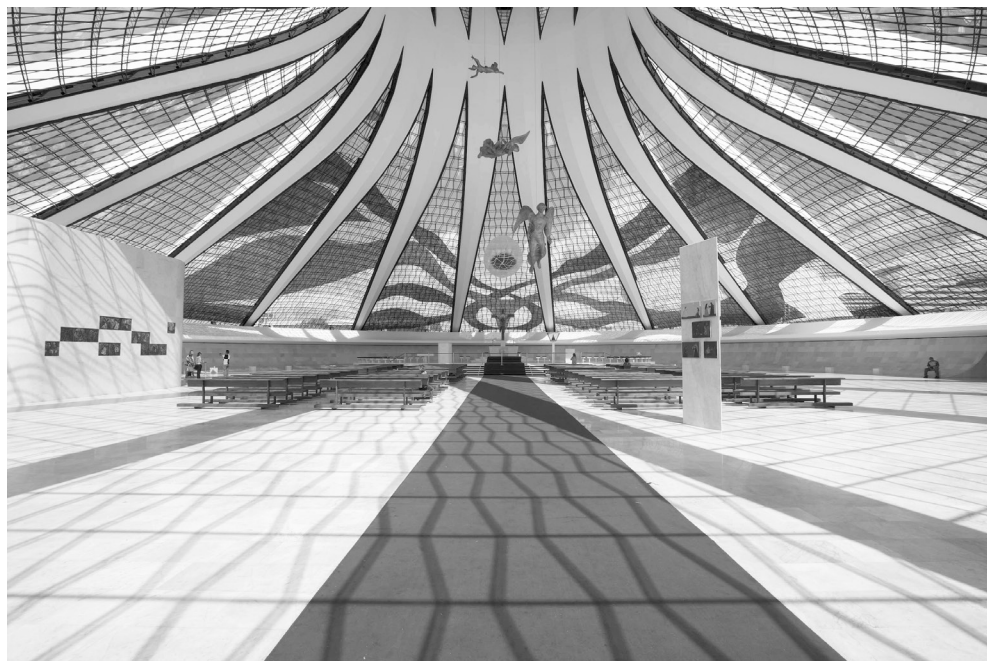
¹² Elaborating on the artistic heritage of the past (including Gothic art), John Paul II wrote: “In the first place, there are the great buildings for worship, in which the functional is always wedded to the creative impulse [...] structural considerations certainly come into play, but so too do the tensions peculiar to the experience of God, the mystery both ‘awesome’ and ‘alluring.’” Cf. John Paul II (K. Wojtyła), *Letter to artists*, Vatican, 4.04.1999, item 8.

¹³ *General instruction of the Roman Missal [Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani]*, item 289, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20030317_ordinamento-messale_en.html (access: 8.09.2024).

¹⁴ The orientation of Christian churches towards the east and introducing as much light into their interior as possible had its theological conditioning. The attitude of the faithful towards the east symbolized the waiting for the parousia – i.e. the second coming in glory of Christ at the end of history from this direction (cf. Lk 1:78). Eden was also located in the east (Gen 2:8), and the rising sun is also a symbol of Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 8:12). Cf. J. Ratzinger, *op. cit.*, p. 70; J. Turbasa, *Ukryte piękno. Architektura współczesnych kościołów*, Biblioteka “Więzi”, Warszawa 2018, pp. 128–129.

¹⁵ *Oscar Niemeyer compôs uma prece em concreto armado*, “Jornal O’Globo. Rio de Janeiro”, 4.06.1970 [after:] L. Scottá, *Arquitetura religiosa de Oscar Niemeyer em Brasília*, master thesis, Universidade de Brasília, 2010, p. 87 (English translation by B. Skrzyszewska).

up to 45,000 worshippers. It is not supported by any additional pillar, which is why the sense of communal experience of the liturgy (in accordance with post-conciliar recommendations) has been emphasized. The interior design gives the impression of an attempt to convey the atmosphere of being in the biblical kingdom of Heaven, which is partly the role of a Christian temple.¹⁶ Niemeyer's design can be considered one of the most spectacular works of sacred architecture of the 20th century, the implementation of which was possible (as well) thanks to the development of technology and its skillful application.



Ill. 1. Interior of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Aparecida in Brasília, Brazil, project: Oscar Niemeyer, photo: Sebastiaan ter Burg, CC BY-SA 2.0, source: <https://rb.gy/d9pomb> (access: 9.06.2024).

Another advantage of using contemporary potential of technology and techniques in sacred architecture is the possibility of expressing ideas with their help. Architecture is able to convey substance to recipients. One of the examples is the church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Riola (Italy) designed by Alvaro Aalto (Ill. 2), built in the 1970s. Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro¹⁷ was involved in the work on the church project – an active father of the Second Vatican Council and a supporter of liturgical reform and renewal of the Church. Post-conciliar changes had a significant impact on the evolution of church spaces. They encouraged “full and active participation by all the people”¹⁸ (so-called *participatio activa*).

¹⁶ “[...] the earthly temple is to resemble the heavenly Jerusalem” (English translation from Polish by B. Skrzyszewska) writes, among others, J. Hani, *Symbolika świętyni chrześcijańskiej*, Znak, Kraków 1998, p. 14.

¹⁷ J. Turbasa, *Kościół Wniebowzięcia Najświętszej Maryi Panny. Riola, Włochy arch.: Alvar Aalto*, “List: miesięcznik katolicki” 2012, no. 12(338), pp. 48–49.

¹⁸ Second Vatican Council, *Constitution...*, items 14, 48.

Lercaro undertook the task of implementing the adopted reforms (also in architecture). He decided to choose Alvar Aalto's¹⁹ design as one that was in line with the new liturgical rite. The most innovative solution in Aalto's design was the possibility of opening and enlarging the space for celebrating the Eucharist outside. In the case of larger events, it is possible to slide open the extensive entrance gates.²⁰ Thanks to this solution, the interior is integrated with the space in front of the church – the square, the slope of which provides better visibility of the presbytery zone for people outside and allows them to actively participate. With this architectural, symbolic gesture, the Church wants to communicate its openness to those who are situated “outside of it.”



Ill. 2. Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Riola, Italy, project: Alvar Aalto, photo: Jakub Turbasa.

A more contemporary example of expressing the idea of opening the Church in architecture is the design of the house of prayer of the Sacred Heart of the Lord Jesus (Ill. 3) in Munich (1996–2000, Germany) by the Allmann Sattler Wappner Architekten group (presently allmannwappner gmbh). The work is characterized by very advanced technical and material solutions. However, the most characteristic and innovative element of the design is the front glass façade, which also has a second use. During the holidays and on days special for the Church,²¹ it serves as a massive, 15-meter-high glass gate, which is considered an

¹⁹ Shortly before his death, Alvar Aalto learned that a church based on his design was to be built in the aforementioned Italian town. It was his first religious project outside Finland. See L. Lahti, *Alvar Aalto: 1898–1976*, Taschen, TMC Art, Köln, Warszawa 2006, p. 14 (English translation from Polish by B. Skrzyszewska).

²⁰ Unfortunately, over time, a glass vestibule was built between the sliding doors and the interior of the church, which Aalto did not include in the original design. Despite the partition being transparent, the idea of the design became less clear.

²¹ The church doors served, among other functions, as the Gate of Mercy during the Year of Mercy (2015–2016) announced by Pope Francis, through which the faithful could pass in a symbolic act.

outstanding achievement of modern engineering capabilities. It is opened by a pneumatic drive hidden in the underground part. The movable wings are considered to be one of the largest in the history of construction in the world, and they weigh 25 tons. “The large gate with its open wings points to the arms spread wide on the cross, with which the Lord wants to embrace us all. Our church building marks a clearly defined holy space, but the church does not live in a ghetto, it is open to all”²² – in these words Archbishop Friedrich Wetter of Munich explained the idea of openness demonstrated through architecture during the consecration of the temple.



Ill. 3. Church of the Sacred Heart of the Lord Jesus in Munich, Germany, project: Allmann Sattler Wappner Architekten, photo: Jakub Turbasa.

Another advantage of modern technological capability is the speed of construction. In the past, grand buildings were typically erected by generations. Started by one architect, they were oftentimes finished by another, modifying the original concept. For example, the creation of the design for the new Basilica of St. Peter in the Vatican was entrusted to Donato Bramante. After his death, many others were involved in the construction, including Raphael Santi and Michelangelo. The final design is far from the original coherent vision of a central temple on a Greek cross plan with a dome. For comparison, the contemporary cathedral, one of the largest in the world – dedicated to St. Mary of the Angels in Los Angeles (Ill. 4) designed by Raphael Moneo, was built in five years (1997–2002), and the entire work was supervised by his studio.

²² Words spoken by Archbishop Friedrich Wetter of Munich and Freising during his homily on the day of the consecration of the church. Cf. *Theological Deutungen und Reflexionen*, “Pfarrei Herz Jesu München”, www.herzjesu-muenchen.de/index3.html (access: 4.09.2015) (English translation from German by B. Skrzyszewska).



Ill. 4. Cathedral of St. Mary of the Angels in Los Angeles, USA, photo: Joe Wolf, CC BY-ND 2.0, source: <https://rb.gy/4pmkd> (access: 13.06.2024).

Techniques and technologies also allow for more accessible and special needs friendly adaptation of religious buildings for the benefit of the faithful, including people with disabilities, parents with children, the elderly, etc. Sound equipment facilitates the better understanding of readings, it is possible to place sanitary facilities in the interiors, as well as to heat or cool the space, and those are just a couple of examples. The benefits resulting from implementation of technology are undeniable.

4. DARK SIDES AND DANGERS

Improper and inappropriate use of technology can cause many dangers. In the pages of the book *The Age of Spectacle*, Dyckhoff describes the contemporary global trend of designing buildings with astonishing architecture we call icons.²³ This phenomenon is facilitated by the current possibilities of technology. Instead of focusing on the essence and purpose of the building, the recipient expects emotional intrigue. They hope to experience surprise, novelty, or extravagance. A believer, a passer-by, or a tourist crossing the threshold of a church wants to satisfy their curiosity about “what else a contemporary architect could come up with” – describes this process Cezary Wąs.²⁴ Foster calls this mechanism *stunned subjectivity*, where

²³ In the past, the abovementioned process was reserved primarily for monumental buildings – sacred buildings, residences of rulers and aristocracy, as well as a few public buildings.

²⁴ C. Wąs, *op. cit.*, p. 7 (English translation from Polish by B. Skrzyszewska).

the whole charm is based on waiting and ends with the moment we arrive at the place²⁵. In the aforementioned book, Dyckhoff calls this phenomenon the *wow effect* or *wow factor*. He puts forward the thesis that such buildings are designed “not to provide shelter [...], but to make an impression on us.”²⁶ Juhani Pallasmaa calls this mechanism “architecture of visual images,” in which buildings have become visual products detached from existential depth and sincerity.²⁷ He accuses them of being designed for cameras, as a “source of visual excitement.”²⁸ It seems that this tendency has not spared part of sacral architecture, which in its essence should not serve to evoke emotions, but to reconcile them; so that it is conducive to the silence of prayer, meditation, communal experience of liturgy and directs focus towards hidden reality.



Ill. 5. Church of God the Merciful Father in Rome, Italy, project: Richard Meier & Partners, photo: Jakub Turbasa.

Another threat of excessive trust in technology may be the phenomenon of dehumanization in architecture. The quoted Finnish theoretician and architect Pallasmaa will add that the inhuman nature of contemporary architecture and contemporary cities can be perceived as a consequence of neglecting the realm of the body and senses.²⁹ The aforementioned threat may manifest itself in the use of the latest materials, not tested in the long term. Stanisław Niemczyk, the author of numerous sacral buildings, considered them (polystyrene, all kinds of plastics, metal panels, stones fastened on anchors, etc.) and the technologies accompanying them as impermanent, without value and with low ecological renewability.³⁰ For example,

²⁵ H. Foster, *Design and crime (and other diatribes)*, Verso, London 2002, pp. 27–28 [after:] T. Dyckhoff, *Epoka spektaklu: Perypetie architektury i miasta XXI wieku*, Karakter, Kraków 2018, pp. 356–357 (English translation from Polish by B. Skrzyszewska).

²⁶ T. Dyckhoff, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

²⁷ J. Pallasmaa, *Oczy skóry. Architektura i zmysły*, Instytut Architektury, Kraków 2012, pp. 38–40.

²⁸ T. Dyckhoff, *op. cit.*, p. 376.

²⁹ J. Pallasmaa, *op. cit.*, p. 26

³⁰ A. Mikulski A., *U źródeł budowania: Stanisław Niemczyk – architekt*, “Autoportret” 2006, no. 3(16), p. 48.

the use of an innovative mixture of self-cleaning concrete³¹ in the Jubilee Church of God the Merciful Father in Rome (1996–2003, Italy) designed by Richard Meier turned out to fail to meet expectations over time (Ill. 5). In order to maintain the cleanliness of the snow-white façade, the house of prayer must be renovated every few years. Additionally, excessively processed matter (e.g. PVC, laminates, etc.) is alien to human senses, and yet the body and senses play an important role in experiencing the liturgy and experiencing architecture.³² Sensual contact with natural materials can open a person to a deeper experience of space. This is particularly true of the realm of the sacred.



Ill. 6. Church of St. Paul the Apostle in Foligno, Italy, project: Fuksas Studio, photo: Jakub Turbasa.

Another danger resulting from too much trust in technology may be the tendency to be fascinated by so-called “modernity” and to use it to build avant-garde forms. Jean Hani notes that art (including architecture) is a privileged field of subversive activity.³³ The most controversial religious buildings of the 21st century include the Church of St. Paul the Apostle in Foligno (2001–2009, Italy) designed by Massimiliano and Doriana Fuksas (Ill. 6). The concept of a concrete church with an extremely ascetic shape caused many tensions from the very beginning. Numerous technical innovations were enforced, but there was no cross or

³¹ The white photocatalytic cement under the name “Bianco TX Millennium” was patented by Italcementi Group specifically for the construction of the millennium church in Rome. Thanks to the photolysis reaction under the influence of sunlight, dirt on the white facades was supposed to be “self-cleaning”. See Italcementi’s challenges, Italcementi Group press release, <http://www.calvinodesign.com/70050/MeierMileniumChurchConcrete.pdf> (access: 01.06.2024).

³² J. Turbasa, *Ukryte piękno...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 123–142.

³³ See J. Hani, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

any external element identifying the building with a Christian place of prayer.³⁴ Half a year after the church was consecrated, the outrage towards contemporary religious constructions reached the zenith, and consequently led to a loud protest. As a result, an open *Appeal to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to Return to Authentically Catholic Sacred Art* has been put out. It was signed by a large group of people, including scientists and intellectuals. The appeal to the Pope included, among other things, an ask for “help so that sacred art and architecture can once again be truly Catholic” and incorporated such categorical accusations against the artists as “contempt for the diligence to beauty”, “strongly contrasted with the past”, or creating art that “actually distort[s] the supreme truth of the Incarnation”.³⁵ When designing objects of avant-garde architecture, one must expect criticism and the consequences of not being understood nor accepted by the community. Umberto Eco notes that the avant-garde in architecture must abstract from its own codes, but this risks the rejection of the architectural thing by society.³⁶ The price of choosing this design path can be extremely expensive.

5. SUMMARY. TREASURES OF WISDOM

Technology serves man. In the Christian understanding, it is born inside him, and then, as a tool, enables him to transform the world. It provides the opportunity to erect buildings in previously inaccessible places, create bold spatial solutions, arrange interiors in new ways, and meet human needs. In architecture, it can manifest itself in new technologies, materials, structures, installations and other facilities. The encouragement to use the benefits of technology, while simultaneously focusing on man and society, resonates in official church documents. However, excessive trust in it when it comes to architecture can have serious consequences. They can manifest themselves in the superficiality of architecture (focusing solely on the visual dimension, showiness, dehumanization), or avant-garde forms that are not accepted by the recipients. This can lead to architecture being separated from existential depth. Additionally, it is noted that the attitude of “liturgical illiteracy” among artists chosen to build churches is a common problem.³⁷

To paraphrase the modernists, a church building is not a “machine for prayer or for the shared experience of liturgy.”³⁸ The role of profound architecture and every significant work of art is to make us “experience ourselves as complete embodied and spiritual beings”. Ratzinger will add that art is a gift, and as a result it cannot be “produced” in a similar way to

³⁴ The Fuksas’ competition design included a small cross on the front elevation. It was not implemented, in favor of a 13.5-meter concrete sculpture with a drawing of a cross by sculptor Enzo Cucchi, standing in front of the building.

³⁵ The fragments quoted come from the open letter entitled *An Appeal to Benedict XVI for a Return to Truly Catholic Sacred Art* from November 2009 [transl. A. Kaźmierczak]. Cf. *Appello a Sua Santità Papa Benedetto XVI per il ritorno a un’arte sacra autenticamente cattolica*, 2009, www.appelloalpapa.blogspot.com (access: 3.11.2017).

³⁶ D. Kozłowski, *O pięknie architektury (współczesnej) – uwagi o ułomności rzeczy użytecznych*, “Czasopismo Techniczne. Architektura” 2007, no. 104(6-A), p. 77.

³⁷ This phenomenon is mentioned in the document concluding the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Commission for Culture and Education in 2006 entitled *The Via Pulchritudinis, Way of Beauty*, P III.2.C, pastoral proposal, 2006, <http://www.cultura.va/content/cultura/en/pub/documenti/ViaPulchritudinis.html> (access: 11.05.2024).

³⁸ J. Pallasmaa, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

the production of technical devices.³⁹ Let the words of Pope Francis on the issue discussed, in the context of religion, remain the finale: “Science and technology expand the boundaries of our knowledge. However, they are not able to provide all the answers. We must reach for the treasures of wisdom stored in religious traditions, folk wisdom, and in literature and art.”⁴⁰

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³⁹ J. Ratzinger, *op. cit.*, p. 121

⁴⁰ Francis (J.M. Bergoglio SJ), *Papież: nauka i technika to za mało, by zrozumieć człowieka*, Przemówienie do uczestników sesji plenarnej Papieskiej Rady Kultury w dn. 18.11.2017 [in:] Vatican News – Polski, 19.11.2017, <https://youtu.be/WWyOOva7EV4?feature=shared> (access: 11.06.2024) (English translation from Polish by B. Skrzyszewska).

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