

Summary

MARTA OSTROWSKA / „Welches der beiden stylistischen Uebel das Kleinere sei?“ A dispute over restoration of the northern tower spire at St. Mary Magdalene church in Wrocław (1888–1891)

During the night of March 22/23 1887 the fire devoured the northern tower spire of St. Mary Magdalene church – the most important Evangelical temple in Wrocław. The event initiated almost three-year-lasting dispute over form and style of the restoration of the burnt steeple. Both the dwellers of the Silesian capital and the local architectural milieu were divided in two opposite fractions who forced their ideas in local and all-German press. One of the groups, with Richard Plüddemann, a city builders councillor, claimed raising a neo-Gothic spire, suitable for a Medieval temple. Behind the barricade there were supporters of the restoration in the form from before the fire which meant a Renaissance one (Hans Lutsch among others). This was a good solution regarding conservation (though the very word was not mentioned in the dispute). The demand of restoring the city symbol, and the spires of St. Mary Magdalene church were regarded as such, was also mentioned. The conflict was not solved by a deliberately organised architectural competition with a winning Gothic-style design. Its results were questioned, and public opinion gave favour to a design prepared by the Brost&Grosser company from Wrocław, what even escalated the conflict. Eventually, in 1890, the city governors indicated the restoration in the form preceding the fire, and the work of designing it was appointed at the city builders council, directed by Plüddemann – a representative of Gothicists wing in the argument.