Holy Place – Sacred Space – Area of Transcendence.

Transformations of the concept of cult sites in the 20th century*

Cezary Wąs

University of Wrocław

In characteristic of Western culture the concept of space for an area of manifestation of the divine being, in the 20th and 21st centuries there was a series of transformations that reduced traditions of many centuries and sometimes of many epochs. Thus, at least three deeply different ways of understanding of the "holy" space have been manifested in this brief, only one hundred-year period. **The first** was the concept of "holy place", traditional, extending beyond Christianity but deeply christianized. Despite the proposed changes in its use, including those advocated by Christian theologians, it survived and retained importance in its very conservative form not only throughout the 20th century, but also in the same manifestation in the 21st one. **The second** concept can be described as modernist or academic because it addressed manifestations of holiness defined by secular scholars – historians or phenomenologists of religion. Characteristic of this concept was the notion of *sacrum*, the phenomenologically purified primary form of holiness, whose manifestations marked the sacral space. **The third** concept was shaped not only outside religion but even outside the world of religious studies. The notion of transcendence gained in popularity initially primarily in philosophical thought, but after also in views of highly educated specialists of various fields. It was referred not only to a certain implied external absolute being but, to a greater extent, to the human need of constantly transgressing the existing state of affairs. As a consequence of the consolidation of the concept of transcendence (of a specific processual and existential

[1] See **C. Wąs**, *Ekstatyczna pustka we współczesnej architekturze kultowej*, "Quart. Kwartalnik Instytutu Historii Sztuki Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego" 2007, No. 2.

[2] An analysis of the process of the formation of early Christian sacred buildings is presented in **B. Iwaszkiewicz-Wronkowska**'s article, *Domus–ecclesia –aedes. Powstawanie świątyni chrześcijańskiej*, [in:] *Sympozja Kazimierskie; poświęcone kulturze świata późnego antyku i wczesnego chrześcijaństwa*, ed. **B. Iwaszkiewicz-Wronkowska**, Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Lublin 1998.

[3] **Eusebius Pamphili**, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. R. J. Defferari, Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C. 1953, p. 6, 10; **J. M. Schott**, *Eusebius' Panegyric on the Building of Churches (H.E. 10.4.2–72). Aesthetics and the Politics of Christian Architecture*, [in:] *Reconsidering Eusebius. Collected Papers on Literary, Historical, and Theological Isseues*, ed. **S. Inowlocki**, **C. Zamagni**, Brill, Leiden 2011, p. 178; **C. Smith**, *Christian Rhetoric in Eusebius' Panegyric at Tyre*, "Vigiliae Christianae" 1989, No. 3; **G. Hodges**, *The Early Church. From Ignatius to Augustine*, Yesterday's Classics, LLC, Chapel Hill 2007, p. 94.

[4] **William Durandus**, *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments: A Translation of the First Book of the Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, trans. J. M. Neale, Benjamin Webb, T. W. Green, Leeds 1843 [also: J. G. F & J. Rivington, London; T. Stevenson, Cambridge], reprint: New York 1973, Chapter I.

[5] **S. J. Schloeder**, *Architecture in Communion. Implementing the Second Vatican Council through Liturgy and Architecture*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1998, p. 195.

[6] **M. Głowacki**, *7 planów Schwarza – kształty w świecie idei*, [in:] *Budownictwo sakralne i monumentalne '2004*, Wydawnictwo Politechniki Białostockiej, Białystok 2004, p. 76–82.

nature), attention has also been paid to areas that facilitate the recognition and the consolidation of the consciousness of the human destiny of seeking the Otherness. Undoubtedly, architecture, especially of minimalist forms, offered the possibility of locating a certain source emptiness or lack of ground which replaced the old concepts of divinity[1].

Each of the three concepts of the place of worship in architectural practice has taken on other spatial solutions in the shape of structures of cult buildings or their interior arrangements.

1. The traditional concept of holy place

Except for early Christianity, when the followers of Christ distanced themselves from building of temples and considered the church only a group of believers at the rite, in the Western culture the tradition of erecting temples reborn beginning from the fourth century[2]. The building dedicated to the liturgy became the "home of God" (*domus Dei*), superseding the earlier, purely Christian conception of the church building as a "house of the congregation" (*domus ecclesiae*). A unique, purely spiritual concept of the temple was supplanted by a material one. Christians, renewing the custom of creating a temple, which for the first time took place in the church built in Tire around 315, developed with the passage of time the practice of shaping a building as a place directly connected with the holy being[3]. This connection was recognized in the Middle Ages for being so close that every component of a building could be said to be a visible material part of a sacred being. Such an approach was characterized by Hugh of Saint Victor's writing (1096–1141), but the most completely it was expressed in the first of the eight volumes of the work of Bishop Durand *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* (circa 1286). Durand, beginning with the explanation of the double meaning of the word "church" (the first – a material building where God's devotion takes place, the second – a spiritual structure that is a congregation of the faithful) carries out the proof that every part of the church – from stones through lime, cement until roof tiles – is the perfect analogy of Jesus[4]. A number of successors followed this path, and Émile Mâle (1862–1954) still recalled the view of a 20th archaeologist, who interpreted a small door on the side of the nave of the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris as the lance wound in the side of Christ[5]. Although in later times it is impossible to point out an equally elaborate description of symbolic meanings, still in the architecture of the historicizing churches of the 19th century you can find very complex ideological programs, and symbolism sporadically appears also in the first half of the 20th century (especially in the 1938 concept of "seven plans" by Rudolf Schwarz) or more often in postmodernist creation[6]. Postmodern neo-historism has prompted significally the renewal of symbolism, but its manifestations are understandable

only for narrow circles or societies in which traditionalist attitudes retained their importance[7].

In Christianity of the West, the rejection of the conception of sacrality of church buildings has been reflected in architecture of Protestant denominations. In architecture characteristic of Catholic confession we can say about four main ways of indicating the sanctity of the space of the temple building[8].

The first and the most primitive of them consists only in delimiting the space treated as a sacred place or intended for worship. Then in separating it from spaces reserved for other purposes, and further in the introduction of additional divisions and complications in the separated space. This way of sanctifying space is older than Christianity, and this religion shares it with other religions, so that it can not be considered original. The belief in the existence of particular places in which divinity manifests itself can be considered as a component of the pagan heritage. Christian cult architecture has always been accompanied by an indelible contradiction due to the fact that in its history both important arguments for the recognition of its extraordinary, rooted in divine origins have emerged, as well as those expressing deep doubts about its sacred character. Maintained in the 20ᵗʰ century and treated with great seriousness, the rite of church dedication clearly indicates that in the Catholic doctrine also the material constituent of the building can be understood as sacred. In the traditional sense, the church building is not only a place of the presence of the sacred being but also itself is sacred (by the rite of dedication and by participation in the sacred liturgy).

The second is the logical complement of the first. The separation of the sacred space from the space of secular activities must be based on the marking of the first, so as to become different from the secular one. This is achieved by means that can be described as artistic, and thus by the use of specific forms and decorations, which are intended to create a space of extraordinarity, sublimity, magnificence, etc. In Western culture it manifested in shaping the cult buildings with the highest artistic demands. In this way, the best churches in each epoch became the quintessence of beauty, sublimity and dramatism. Including the 20ᵗʰ century, important churches were created by outstanding architects and surrounded by universal respect, protection and care. However, it must be remembered that the basis of such a shaping was the pagan idea of associating divinity with beauty. This idea has been strongly christianized and deeply assimilated by Christianity, which makes it impossible to treat as fully justified the arbitrary statement that the decorative treatment of churches is merely a continuation of pagan tradition.

In the 20ᵗʰ century, the character of the beauty itself became an additional problem – connected with the idea of the beauty of the cult building as a factor of its sacred character. The traditional conceptions of the beauty of church buildings, based on the principles

[7] A description of holy places within the border of contemporary Poland is provided by **A. Kramiszewska**'s work *"Prawdziwie jest to dom Boga i brama do nieba!" Opowieść etiologiczna miejsc świętych w zwierciadle sztuki*, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2012.

[8] **C. Wąs**, *Sacrum w architekturze*, [in:] *Nadprzyrodzone*, ed. **E. Przybył**, Nomos, Kraków 2003, p. 245–246.

[9] **H. Karlinger**, *Die Fronleichnamskirche in Aachen*, "Die Christliche Kunst" 1930/1931, No. 27, p. 248–250; **E. Widder**, *Europäische Kirchenkunst der Gegenwart. Architektur, Malerei und Plastik*, Oberösterreichischer Landes–verlag, Linz 1968, p. 28.

[10] **R. Schwarz**, *Wegweisung der Technik und andere Schriften zum Neuen Bauen 1926–1961*, "Bauwelt Fundamente" 1979, No. 51, p. 36–39, 76–77.

[11] ***Idem***, *Die Fronleichnamskirche*, "Die Schildgenossen" 1931, No. 11, p. 284–287; **F.–B. Raith**, *Der heroische Stil. Studien zur Architektur am Ende der Weimarer Republik*, Verlag für Bauwesen, Berlin 1997, p. 132. Compare also: **U. Schäfer**, *Die Pfarrkirche St. Fronleichnam in Aachen*, Deutscher Kunstverlag, München–Berlin 2007.

[12] **R. Schwarz**, *Vom Bau der Kirche*, Verlag Anton Pustet, Salzburg 1998 [ed. I: Werkbund Verlag, Würzburg 1938; ed. II: Schneider, Heidelberg 1947].

of harmony and the use of antique forms or maybe more often of Gothic ones, were in conflict with modern forms of beauty, for which the world of technology and other manifestations of the rational nature of the "new times" were the main source. The canon of sacred architecture disintegrated. Gothic-style buildings continued to be built, but churches based on the rationalized system of forms were built more and more often. **The church of Corpus Christi in Aachen, built by Schwarz (1897–1961) in 1928–1930** [Fig. 1], remains till today the epitome of modernist sacred architecture[9]. It is no accident that this building resembles a factory facility with a chimney, and in the explanatory note published by the architect in 1928 he wrote about the manifestation of divinity in the field of technology, adequate for the "new times"[10]. Although Schwarz soon withdrew from his views onto purely Catholic positions, his statement remains an excellent testimony to the creation of a place of worship for the new form of divinity[11].

The third way of sacralisation of space is to give it meaning associated with the content of the faith and/or to shape it wholly or its part as symbols. Architecture is not an art with a great ability to transmit messages, for example verbal communiques, but shapes or forms of a building can produce specific emotions and evoke associations. Certain conventional meanings can be also attributed to buildings or their parts, and then, by sermons or other doctrinal utterances, can be appropriately understood even though only by the elites. As already mentioned above, in the history of architecture, especially in the Middle Ages, there was abundance of allegorical-symbolic explanation of the church building and its parts. The cross, the altar, the tower, the dome, the column, the stained glass window or the pulpit have gained original interpretations in Christianity, many of which have survived the epoch of its foundation and have become a tradition understandable till modern times, as if a language that is also now intelligible at least for creators or connoisseurs of architecture, but primarily by persons of the clergy.

In the 20th century, especially in its first half, there was a decline in the traditional symbolism associated with the setting of places of worship. In the increasing number of modernist churches none of components of the outer appearance indicated the cultic purpose of a given building. A certain, but unsuccessful form of opposition to the decline of symbolism in sacred buildings, was the theory of "seven plans" in Schwarz's *Vom Bau der Kirche*, according to which, the author attempted to attribute specified theological content to certain basic forms of organization of the structure and the inner space[12]. Throughout his work, despite distinct signs of genius, there was a dose of arbitrariness that made Schwarz's attempt artificial and overly intellectual. The more common form of return to symbolism occurred in postmodernist architecture, when the constructions of churches referring to the ancient traditions of sacred architecture
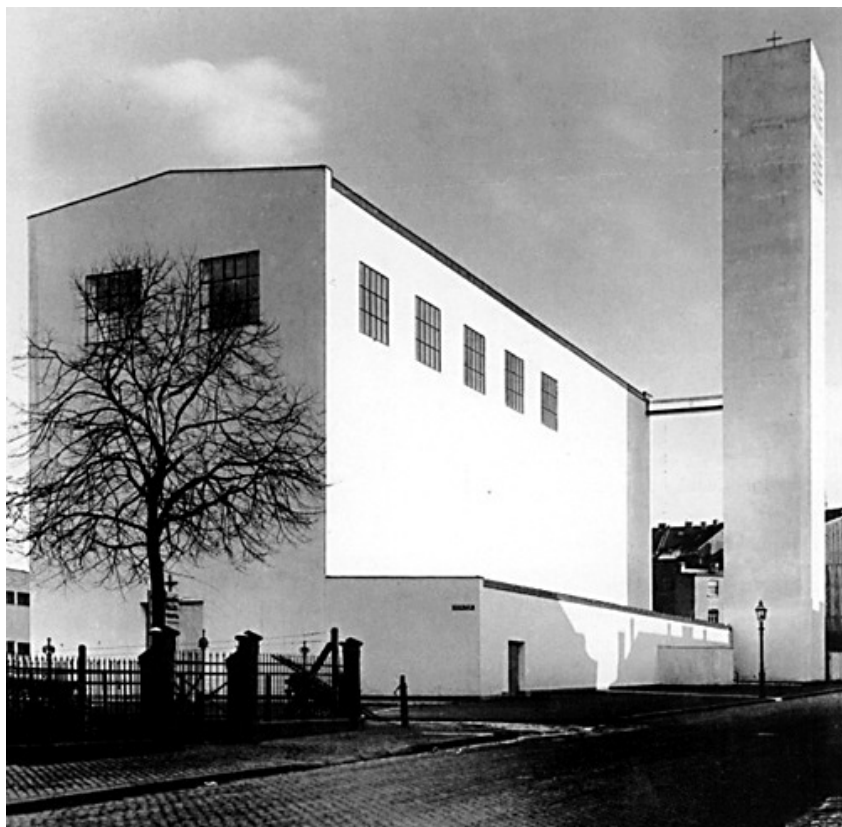
began to appear in the 1970s. This was a very specific symbolism, because its content was not directly related to the sacred being, but first of all they restored, sometimes in the form of direct quotations, shapes of ancient temples. In the history of sacred architecture this was not a completely new phenomenon, considering even the tradition of imitating the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, or thousands of imitations of the Early Baroque Church of the Il Gesù in Rome (1568–1584)[13], but in postmodernist historism those copies or imitations of ancient buildings had a more surprising character.

The prolonged cult of individualism and originality, whose development in the 20ᵗʰ century was not hampered even by the great collectivist ideologies of fascism and communism, made all imitation contradictory to the important determinants of contemporary human identity. Referring to specific patterns was not entirely alien to the tradition of modernist architecture, but in such references there was no attempt at ideological or symbolic deepening of the values of architectural work. Copying of fragments or the whole of historically important buildings to emphasize transcendent values inherent in continuity and tradition can thus be seen as a clear manifestation of anti-modernist tendencies, characteristic of certain mental currents of the last quarter of the 20ᵗʰ century.

[13] Compare, among others, **J. H. Kilde**, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space. An Introduction to Christianity Architecture and Worship*, Oxford University Press, Oxford–New York 2008, p. 53; **H. W. Dey**, *The Afterlife of the Roman City. Architecture and Ceremony in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2015, p. 230; **A. Grzybowski**, *Die polnischen Kirchen in Gosławice und Miszewo als indirekte "Kopien der Anastasis-Rotunde"*, "Architectura. Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Baukunst" 1998, No. 28, fasc. 2.

Fig. 3 Pierre Fakhoury, Basilica of Our Lady of Peace (*Basilique Notre-Dame de la Paix*), 1985-1990, Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast; http://abidjan.city.ci/actualite/basilique-notre-dame-de-la-paix-yamoussoukro (online: 5 XI 2017)

¹⁴ **N. Eleh**, *Architecture and Power in Africa*, Praeger Publishers, Westport–London 2002, p. 131-135; **C. Wąs**, *Antynomie współczesnej architektury sakralnej*, Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu, Wrocław 2008, p. 100-103.

¹⁵ **E. Węcławowicz-Gyurkovich**, *Polska architektura sakralna. Tradycja i współczesność. Kierunki poszukiwań twórczych w najnowszej architekturze*, "Nasza Przeszłość" 1992, No. 78; *eadem*, *Współczesna polska architektura sakralna w twórczości krakowskich architektów. Wybrane zagadnienia*, "Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki" 1996, No. 2-3, p. 321-329; *eadem*, *Postmodernizm w polskiej architekturze*, Kraków 1998, p. 33-34.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 37; **J. Dominiczak**, **K. Rutkowska**, *Odtwarzanie znaczeń*, "Architektura" 1984, No. 6, p. 38.

Two outstanding church buildings of the 20th century that recalled ancient churches, are **the Basilica of Our Lady of Peace in Yamusukro** (the administrative capital of Côte d'Ivoire) [Fig. 2], and **the Basilica of Our Lady of Sorrows in Lichen** [Fig. 3] – both imitating Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome¹⁴. A copy of the front facade of the Roman basilica was also intended to show by Ewa Węcławowicz-Gyurkovich in the St. Peter the Apostle Church in Wadowice (1984)¹⁵. In turn the outline of the Roman basilica of Peter was repeated in the projection of the baptismal chapel designed by Jacek Dominiczak and Katarzyna Rutkowska for a church for Gdynia¹⁶. The furthest confirmation of the phenomenon of imitation is the complete reconstruction of a non-existent building. An example of such a phenomenon was the reconstruction of The Moscow Cathedral of Christ the Savior consecrated in 1883, then demolished by Stalin in 1931 and reconstructed in the years 1990–2000¹⁷. In other buildings of postmodernist historism, less direct patterns has been used more frequently, but it is the symbolic tradition that has been the main determinant of their aesthetic values.
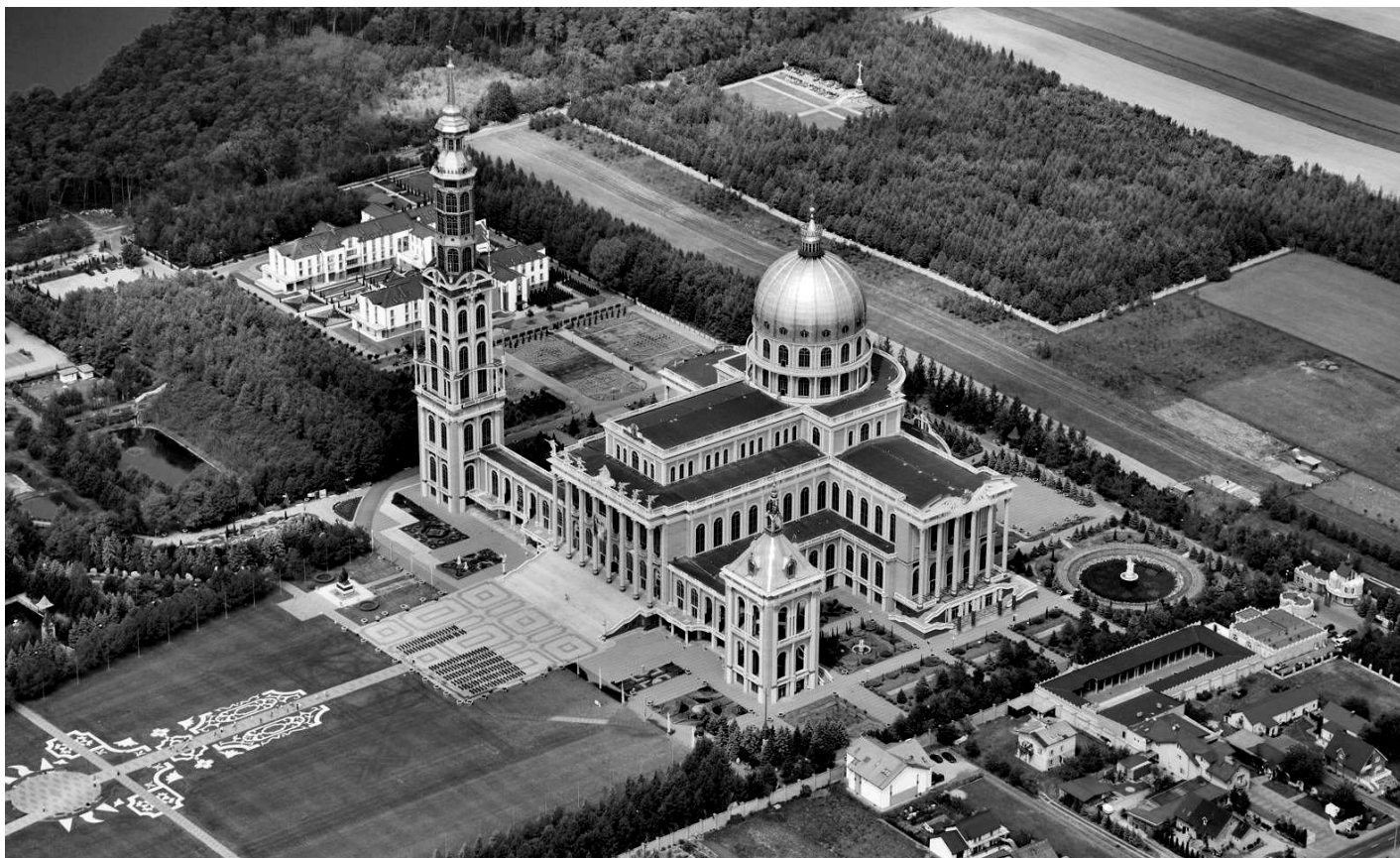
Fig. 4 Barbara Bielecka, Basilica of Our Lady of Licheń (*Sanktuarium Matki Bożej Bolesnej Królowej Polski*), 1994–2004; http://fotopolska.eu/foto/341/341393.jpg (online: 5 XI 2017)

The fourth type of sacralisation of space is to give it functions related to the world of religious beliefs. The Catholic temple was recognized in the official documents of the Church as the only place suitable for celebrating the Mass and other religious rites[18]. Also in regard to individual acts of faith, the church building was treated as a place specifically for prayer or contemplation. It should be noted, however, that while pre-modern buildings were especially made useful for the purposes of worship and the canon law before the Second Vatican Council prohibited to combine them with buildings of other than cultic purposes, anyway their utility qualities was in equilibrium with artistic and symbolic values. Disregarding the latter and focusing solely on the liturgy as decisive in the design of the church marks a new tradition, typical of modernism, which we will discuss below.

In the history of Christianity, reservations about the theory of holy place were made in the early Christian period, later they were formulated more sporadically (e.g. by St. Bernard of Clairvaux), to emerge in a very radical form in the minds of such reformers as

[17] **S. N. Romanowa**, *Chram Christa Spasitelja*, Profizdat, Moskau 2000. In order to raise funds, the Moscow authorities sent out invitations to successful companies to finance reconstruction suggesting a need to participate in this venture.

[18] *Instrukcja Redemptionis Sacramentum. O zachowaniu i unikaniu pewnych rzeczy dotyczących Najświętszej Eucharystii*, Kongregacja Kultu Świętego i Dyscypliny Sakramentów, Wydawnictwo M, Kraków 2004, p. 63.

[19] **C. Wąs**, *Antynomie…*, p. 19.

[20] *Europäischer Kirchenbau 1950–2000*, ed. **W. J. Stock**, Prestel, München 2003, p. 218

[21] **B. Reymond**, *L'architecture religieuse des protestants; histoire, caractéristique, problèmes actuels*, Labor et Fides, Genève 1996, s. 44–71.

[22] **H. Bullinger**, *Confessio et expositio simplex orthodoxae fidei et dogma‑tum Catholicorum syncerae religionis Christianae*, Zürich 1566, reissue: Kaiser Verlag, München 1938 and Kessinger Publishing, Whitefish 2009.

Martin Luther or John Calvin, and in 20th century among theologians questioning the separation of sacred and secular spheres. The Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945) was probably the first theologian who in our day was positively evaluating the departure of sacredness. Later on, such position was advocated by Harvey Gallagher Cox on the Evangelical side, and Marie-Dominique Chenu, Yves Congar, Karl Rahner and Johann Baptist Met on the Catholic one[19]. Although the thesis on the ultimate sanctification of the world by Christ and, consequently, the termination of division into the sacred realm and the secular one, was preached initially in the elite circles of German and French theologians, but in practice it merged with the development of entirely secular avant-garde modernism in architecture and the growing popularity of composition of buildings as orthogonal forms. However, the purely theological view on the end of the separation of the spheres of the world has had a profound influence on the suggestions made about ways of shaping church buildings, since it was proclaimed no need for the formal separation of churches from other buildings. As a consequence, in the 1960s and 1970s of the 20th century, there was a remarkable reduction in the number of churches that, in the traditional way, stood out among lay buildings with their own canon of forms and special artistic and symbolic values.

A distinct group of church buildings not separated from secular ones are buildings integrally combined with parish facilities intended for public purposes: community meetings, social and educational activities, games and weddings. These works were mainly erected in Germany, Switzerland and France, but are also typical for Scandinavian countries. An example of such combination of functions may be even the works of a Finnish architect Juha Leiviskä in Oulu (Puolivälinkangas, 1975), Vantaa (Myyrmäen kirkko, 1984) and Manisto (Männistön Pyhän Johanneksen kirkko, 1992). Churches, in which the daily life of the community was made equivalent to the liturgical activities, started to be created in the mid-1960s, and the Evangelical-Lutheran Center in Burgdorf (1973) by Paul Friedrich Posenenske is mentioned as an early summary of experiences in that field[20]. Undoubtedly the decisive number of such complexes was created in the Protestant environment, but they were also common in the 20th century in architecture of the Catholic Church and have become one of the arguments supporting the allegations of "protestantisation" of the Roman Catholic faith.

Historically, it has to be admitted that among the evangelical denominations the sacredness of the building of the faithful has been questioned[21]. Although a Swiss theologian Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575) in his *Das Zweite Helvetische Bekenntnis* (*Confessio Helvetica posteriori*)[22] from 1561 indeed emphasized the sacredness of a place of worship of God ("*scimus loca Deo cultuique eius dedicata, non esse prophana sed sacra*", chapter XII), but further he explained

that this quality was due to the fact that a community unites itself around service to God. Both Martin Luther and John Calvin emphasized definitely stronger the lack of sanctity of congregation houses, but in the 20th century, in a situation of great indifference for theological reasons, the real cause that church objects of the both Christian denomination become formally similar was rather the predominance of avant-garde varieties of modernism becoming established in the architectural circles after World War II. The artist, more than the theologian, was allowed to dictate style, especially when on the Second Vatican Council it was stated that "the Church did not consider any style as its own, but, accordingly to natures and conditions of nations and the needs of various rites, it admitted artistic forms of each epoch"[23].

2. The modernist concept of sacred space

As regards the places of worship in the second half of the 20th century, both in secular studies and in theology, the term "sacred architecture" and sometimes also "sacral space" have become popular. In the case of frequent use of the term *sacrum* or "sacred", almost no attention was paid at all to the fact that these terms are derived from religious studies (profoundly secular in their nature) and, moreover, they ignore the specificity of the Christian message. The term *sacrum* appeared in the writings of émile Durkheim, and was disseminated by Mircea Eliade. It draws attention to the functioning of objects or places reality, in which direct manifestation of the divine being occurs. The controversial element of the theory of *sacrum* is the fact that it concerns primordial holiness, which precedes divinity. *Sacrum* is understood as a phenomenon that concretizes itself in a given religion. The term *sacrum* is often referred to the sphere of objects, which is in contradiction with perceiving holiness only in personal beings, typical for Christianity. The radical elimination of holiness of objects would, however, be incompatible with human habits, although it seems to be an extension of pagan beliefs.

The question arises about the logical consequences of using the term sacral architecture. It may be assumed that this term assumes the human ability to respond to phenomena of reality, which are not conditioned by conscious activity, and where epiphany and theophany occur. This would mean that the revelation of holiness is exclusively the privilege of a holly being, to which the delimination of the area by the followers is secondary. Any action to emphasize the separateness of a place of a manifestation of *sacrum* in the world – including the architectural activity – is of little significance to the seriousness of the event itself. In this case, *sacrum* creates an idiopathic space, and nothing can conceal or emphasize it.

It is difficult, however, to deny the possibility of revealing of the holiness in a building erected as if on a raw ground, in a place where

[23] Sobór Watykański II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium. Konstytucja o Liturgii świętej*, Wydawnictwo Wrocławskiej Księgarni Archidiecezjalnej, Wrocław 1997, Chapter VII, § 123, p. 95.

Fig. 5 Pierre Vago, Eugène Freyssinet, Basilica of St. Pius X (*Basilique Saint-Pie X*), 1956–1958, Lourdes; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fale_-_France_-_Lourdes_-_24.jpg (online: 5 XI 2017)

there was no pre-epiphany phenomenon. In a less radical version, the term "sacred space" may mean a space consciously separated and appropriately adapted for acts of getting closer to the deity. The term "sacred architecture" would then conceal the belief in the existence of objects that can mediate in contact with the deity. Such objects are "devoted" to divinity not only by the power of the special rite, but also by treating the whole process of their formation as a religious ritual. All the characteristics of the holy shrine, including its artistic and aesthetic qualities, are sacred in a certain way. The beauty of the building – captured in an artistic way – is understood as the beauty derived from God and through human activity – as if a kind of prayer – again addressed its source.

In the most common sense, the term "sacred architecture" refers simply to buildings devoted to cultic purposes. In the 20th century, there was an absolutisation of the utility values in comparison to the needs of the liturgy and the emergence of a kind of "liturgical

functionalism", which was an equivalent of the mainstream of avant--garde modernism in 20ᵗʰ century architecture.

Each of the three briefly characterized above ways of understanding the term "sacred architecture" has gained a distinct expression in the construction practice.

Firstly, the revealed holiness was not originally associated with the extraordinary character of architecture, which contributed to the fact that numerous pilgrimages were devoid of outstanding creation. The epiphany, the direct manifestation of the deity, is the decisive factor. Pilgrims, arriving at such places, are thirsty for mystical contact with the holiness and ignore any possible shortcomings of the environment. Although the environment in which the revelation of the holiness has taken place is getting after architectural and artistic binding, efforts are always made to preserve intact at least individual components of a space of an original event. The contemporary example of such a situation is upheld in the unchanged shape of the Massabielle cavern, where the repeated visions of the Blessed Virgin Mary took place, or one of the largest Christian temples, accommodating up to 20 thousand people, the underground **Basilica of Pius X in Lourdes** (1957–1958) [Fig. 4] by Pierre Vago and Eugène Freyssinet[24]. The purely engineering structure of a church dug under a large meadow is created by 29 reinforced concrete uncovered ribs in a raw construction form. Although the reasons for such a construction of the structure were more complex and an important cause was also the desire to preserve intact the landscape and surroundings of the historic 19ᵗʰ church, it must be admitted that its "non-existent" architecture allows to focus on the essence of its interior rituals. One should also ask whether the pilgrims coming here worship only the Blessed Mother Revealed to Bernadette Soubirou and the precise message associated with this revelation, or whether they come to this place for a more universal purification and rejuvenation. Isn't this second purpose of the pilgrimage better fulfilled exactly by that underground temple devoid of concrete content?

Secondly, the space used to mediate with the deity has always been endeavored to give an extraordinary character using beauty, ornamentation or symbolic values. The difference between the old and the new times is the shift of emphasis in the sense of the deity itself. Whereas in the earlier tradition Christian God was described in the language of Christian theology, as a result of the increasing popularity of the conception *sacrum* from religious studies, its understanding mixed with the qualities of holiness captured in a specific, so-called "phenomenological" manner. Such syncretism further facilitated the worship of the Christian God in temples built according to the principles of avant-garde modernism, whose abstract forms were adequate for the universalisation of the Christian message. Historical research have also shown that the non-depicting forms of works of masters of early modernism painting,

[24] **G. E. Kidder–Smith**, *The new churches of Europe*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York 1964, p. 110; **E. Widder**, *op. cit.*, p. 61; **R. Lacroix** *et al.*, *Eugène Freyssinet: A revolution in the art of construction*, Presses de l'ecole nationale des ponts et chaussées, Paris 2004, p. 107.

Fig. 6 Rudolf Schwarz, Interior of the Burg Rothenfels chapel for "Quickborn" Catholic Youth Movement, Bayern 1924; https://szakralis.
files.wordpress.com/2009/03/schwarz_rothenfels.jpg (online: 5 XI 2017)

like Piet Mondrian, Wassily Kandinsky and Kazimir Malevich, were inspired by the search for some kind of supernatural holiness or spirituality. It can be then assumed that also the geometric beauty of modernist architecture creates qualities that make its creations sacral. At the same time, characteristics of such an architecture make it ideologically similar to certain non-doctrinal features of modernized Christianity. Although theological modernism itself raised official objections of the Catholic Church, and negative reactions of theologians concerned also other modernist phenomena, the analysis of contemporary spirituality indicates that there are many spaces of mediation between institutionalized religious and non-institutional quasi-religious beliefs. An analogous phenomenon is also the convergence of Christian denominations whose most radical manifestation is an ecumenical community of Taizé and its Temple of Reconciliation (*L'église de la Réconciliation*), a church building as if devoid of the form. The building of the congregation of this religious community, the joint work of Friar Denis (1934–2015) and a group of young activists from the Protestant group "Aktion

Sühnezeichen", erected in 1962 and later expanded, is a distinct example of the decline of the canon of sacred buildings. A similar lack of basing of a church building on a particular architectural tradition is also demonstrated by other religions focused on the non-denominational spiritual unity of all people. In some cases, however, they achieve more aesthetically pleasing results, as was the case in the Bahá'í prayer house in New Delhi completed in 1986. The Indian object resembles a lotus flower, but it also has many common features with the opera house in Sydney by Jørn Utzon, and even by such complexity of inspiration it suits well its purpose[25].

Thirdly, as it was briefly discussed, much of the cult buildings of Western Christianity in the 20ᵗʰ century were buildings well suited to the needs of performing certain rites. The origins of this trend are associated with activists of the so-called Liturgical Movement of the early 20ᵗʰ century. They sought to purify the liturgy from many historically molded forms and to increase the significance of the Mass. The believers gathered in the liturgy, as in early Christianity, began to be defined as the Church, while the church building and its role in performing rites were loosing the importance. The most desirable form of church building was that which allowed to focus the assembled's attention on the altar and at the same time to give them the feeling of communion – the transformation into the Church.

One of the first buildings to meet the requirements of the reformed liturgy was the rebuilding of one of the rooms at Rothenfels Castle in Bavaria in 1924 for the chapel for the youth association "Quickborn" [Fig. 5], where new liturgical ideas were practiced under the spiritual leadership of Romano Guardini[26]. The project was commissioned to an architect Schwarz, who was connected with the "Quickborn" association for some time. An old knight's hall was transformed into a cube-shaped room, and the ceiling and walls were painted white. The altar in the chapel was reduced to a small cube covered with a simple plate and surrounded by a hundred small cubes of wood, replacing benches that surrounded it on three sides. In the arrangement of the room, it was embodied the pursuit, characteristic of the Liturgical Movement, to encircle the altar on all sides, which at the beginning of the reforms was achieved by detaching it from the presbytery wall and shifting towards the nave with the believers. Central or more often centralizing churches with an arrangement of benches around or on the three sides of the altar were the main manifestation of the tendency to modernize the liturgy, and their construction was enabled by reinforced concrete structures that allowed to erect single-space structures without the ancient divisions into the nave and the presbytery.

Ottokar Uhl (1931–2011) was a prominent representative of Schwartz's tendency at Rothenfels Castle who used equally raw and parsimonious solutions in the chapels Katholische Hochschulgemeinde at the Ebendorferstraße 8 (1958, from 1993

[25] The architect of the Bahá'i Mashriqu'l–Adhkar was Fariborz Sabha born (1948) and educated in Iran, now living in Canada and USA. For more information on the object, see **A. Posocco**, *Il Tempio Baha'i a Nuova Delhi*, "L'Industria Italiana del Cemento" 1988, No. 1; **S. Foster**, *Geometry and the House of Worship*, "Architectural Design" 2004, No. 6.

[26] **H. E. A. Reinhold**, *The Architecture of Rudolf Schwarz*, "Architectural Forum" 1939, No. 52, p. 22–27; **R. Proctor**, *Building the Modern Church. Roman Catholic Church Architecture in Britain, 1955 to 1975*, Routledge, New York 2014, p. 138; **F. Debuyst**, *Modern Architecture and Christian Celebration*, John Knox Press, Richmond 1968, p. 60; **P. Kopeček**, *Setkání jednoho architekta s jedním liturgem*, "Era21" 2004, No. 4, p. 59–61; **R. Stegers**, *Sacred Buildings. A Design Manual*, Birkhäuser, Basel 2008, p. 21.

Edith Stein Kapelle) and at the Peter-Jordan-Straße 29 (1959–1961) or in the chapel of the Abbey of Melk (1966), strongly influencing another Viennese work, i.e. Donaucitykirche (*scilicet* Die Kirche Christus, Hoffnung der Welt, 1999–2000) by Heinz Tesar, built four decades later, located among skyscrapers of a business district.

It would probably be impossible to find a direct link between the early 20th century fascination with tribal religions, rituals done in circles or temples in the Stonehenge type, and the tendency to place the altar in the center of Christian church buildings. However, a common one for contemporary religious studies and the Liturgical Movement, was a modernist attitude to look for basic phenomena deprived by the intellect of the historically-shaped and complex characters. Modernist churches in the form of rectangular solids often with – notably in Germany and Switzerland – a centrally placed altar are designed for performing Christian rites, but one more "minor" reduction of depriving them of the cross would be enough to convert them into temples of the universal *sacrum*. This might be the fate for the mighty pilgrimage church of Mary, Queen of Peace in Neviges, designed in 1968 by Gottfried Böhm and dedicated in 1972. Other numerous temples of various sizes and shapes, with centralizing interiors and altars surrounded by benches on several sides, that have been created for several decades now also privileged the universality of their message over the specificity of a particular Christian denomination. If we would like to point their examples, they would include, among others, the works of Emil Steffann (1899–1968), including the 1955 Munich St. Lorenz Church (St.-Laurentius-Kirche), the St. Remaclus Church in Cochem (1964–1967) and the St Hedwig Church in Cologne (St.-Hedwig-Kirche 1966–1967), and moreover the St. Judas Thaddaeus Church (St.-Judas-Thaddäus 1989) in Karlsruhe by Otokar Uhl, or a strongly expressive, concrete, brutalistic Church of St. Spirit in Emmerich-Leegmeer (Heilig-Geist-Kirche 1962–1966) by Dieter Georg Baumewerd[27], the church in Emsdetten also dedicated to St. Spirit, or the St. Chritopher Church on Sylt (St.-Christophorus-Kirche 1997–2000) by the same architect.

Although most of the works characterized by the above described arrangement of interior space were created in Germany, their examples can also be found in Poland. A replica of the discussed trend may be even the church of the Immaculate Heart of the Holy Virgin in Siechnice, the work of Tadeusz Szukała, designed in 1972 and executed in 1973–1981, where an amphitheatric bench arrangement was used in the interior – unique in the context of the whole world architecture, and earlier adopted by Frank Lloyd Wright in the Church of the Annunciation (1956–1961) of the Greek Orthodox Church in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.

3. Areas of transcendence

An important part of the church buildings in the 20th and early 21st century was built for the needs of the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations by architects declaring atheistic attitude. The more detailed analysis of these buildings reveals, however, that they contain very clear reflections on the meaning of human existence, whose essence is the constant crossing of the mental or spiritual *status quo*. Within this conception, transcendence is not understood only as an unknowable divine being, but as a process of transgression directed at a certain infinity and giving a sense and a value to a life of an individual. This kind of philosophy can not be attributed solely to one creator, as its themes go back to Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), and in 20th century it was represented by, among others, reflections of Søren Kierkegaard (1889–1976) and Karl Jaspers (1883–1969), which differ in many respects.

Reconstructing the contemporary consciousness of transcendence, dispersed to a large degree and being rather a social being than a product of individuals, it can be said that its source was primarily a weakening of the position of institutional religions. On the one hand, attempts to create new religions entered into a certain void emerged after their former position, as was the case with Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy (1861–1925), culminating in the building of the magnificent "temple" of the Goetheanum in Swiss Dornach (1924–1928). On the other hand, the 20th century was full of the achievements of scholars of religious studies such as Émile Durkheim (1858–1917, *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, 1912), Rudolf Otto (1869–1937, *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen*, 1917) Mircea Eliade (1907–1986, *Traité d'histoire des religions. Morphologie du sacré*, 1949), whose work depicted religious or metaphysical values as indispensable for the constitution of each individual or social being. Many philosophers, such as Henri Bergson (1859–1941), considered religion as not only a form of social integration, but also as a pursuit for a certain unknowable and as if source transcendental reality.

Already in the 1940s and then in the post-World War II period, overcoming empirical life and building a sense of existence based on responses to the unfathomable till now possibilities inherent in the world became the content of Jasper's philosophy. The German philosopher, as well as the other thinkers of the Frankfurt School considering those questions, warned however – although perhaps ineffectively – against focusing attention on developing only rational perspectives. In this situation, the architecture created for the needs of specific denominations and created by religiously indifferent designers became a space reminiscent of other human destiny than

the ordinary and embraced by reason. In objects of this kind, it was recalled and shown that the common efficacy does not exhaust the most important modalities of human existence.

One of the most famous buildings of the 20th century, where a trace of the cult of transcendence could be found, was the pilgrims' chapel built by Le Corbusier in Ronchamp (1950–1955) [Fig. 6]. In its complex character, an equivalent place was found by purely Christian motifs, the elements that indicate an understanding of the idea of *sacrum*, but also the convictions of the need to continually go beyond traditional notions and shapes of existence. In the half-century after the chapel was built, the number of buildings revealing the fascination with entering into the undiscovered potentials of the Being and the existence significantly increased. Especially where secularism and permanent change was made an important determinant in a given State, as in France or Germany, buildings started to be erected which, although officially designed for the needs of Catholic Church, were primarily a tribute to the mysterious aspects of all existence and an expression of the cult of transcendence.

But the traditional religions are being replaced not only by philosophically sublime reverence for the almost unknowable figure of pure Being that precedes every being, including the being of personal God, that is something of a kind of "black hole" filled with energy – the pre-source of all potential existence. Religious mystics or theologians usually defined this pre-primordial side of the existence in negative terms and spoke of emptiness or nothingness, and in a more metaphorical way of night or desert. In Heidegger's language, it was *Abgrund*, the absence of any foundation, condemning the man for incessant uncertainty. Going beyond God into divinity (as Meister Eckhardt did already), or nowadays in *sacrum*, was supplemented with religiousness with more positive vectors. In the 19th, the usual religions were joined by almost religious fascination with the art or the nation, and today a similar character is manifested in a variety of conceptions of meaning formulated on the basis of economic, political or scientific views. Apart from the religions that are institutionalized, but also beside the directing onto transcendence, achievements of advanced technology. are now worshiped and honoured. A confirmation for the existence of this kind of new form of religiousness can also be sought in Thomas Luckmann's theses on the so-called "invisible religion", characteristic of the elite of modern societies[28]. According to this author's views, scattered religiosity can be found in human endeavors for success or desire for scientific and technical achievements[29]. A very distinct expression of this form of religiosity can be found in **Franck Hammoutene's church in Paris's La Défense district** (1998) [Fig. 8] and in **the so-called Christ's Pavilion by Meinhard von Gerkan**, who once stood at the Expo in Hanover (2000) [Fig. 9]. The mentioned tendencies are equally evident in the increasingly popular pan-denominational

[28] **T. Luckmann**, *The invisible religion: the problem of religion in modern society*, Mcmillan, New York 1967.

[29] The issue of the sanctification of rationalism and the fetishization of scientific activity is also considered by **M. Starzyński**'s, *Nowy ateizm. Analiza krytyczna*, Nomos, Kraków 2015, s. 105–114.

[30] *Tadao Ando. Light and Water*, introduction **K. Frampton**, ed. **P. Brunetta**, Birkhäuser–Verlag für Architektur, Basel 2003, p. 212–215; **W. J. Stock**, *Architekturführer. Christliche Sakralbauten in Europa seit 1950*, Prestel Verlag, München 2004, p. 182–183; **M. Furuyama**, *Tadao Ando. The geometry of human space*, trans. L. Hoaglund, H. Watanabe, Taschen, Köln 2006, p. 70–73.
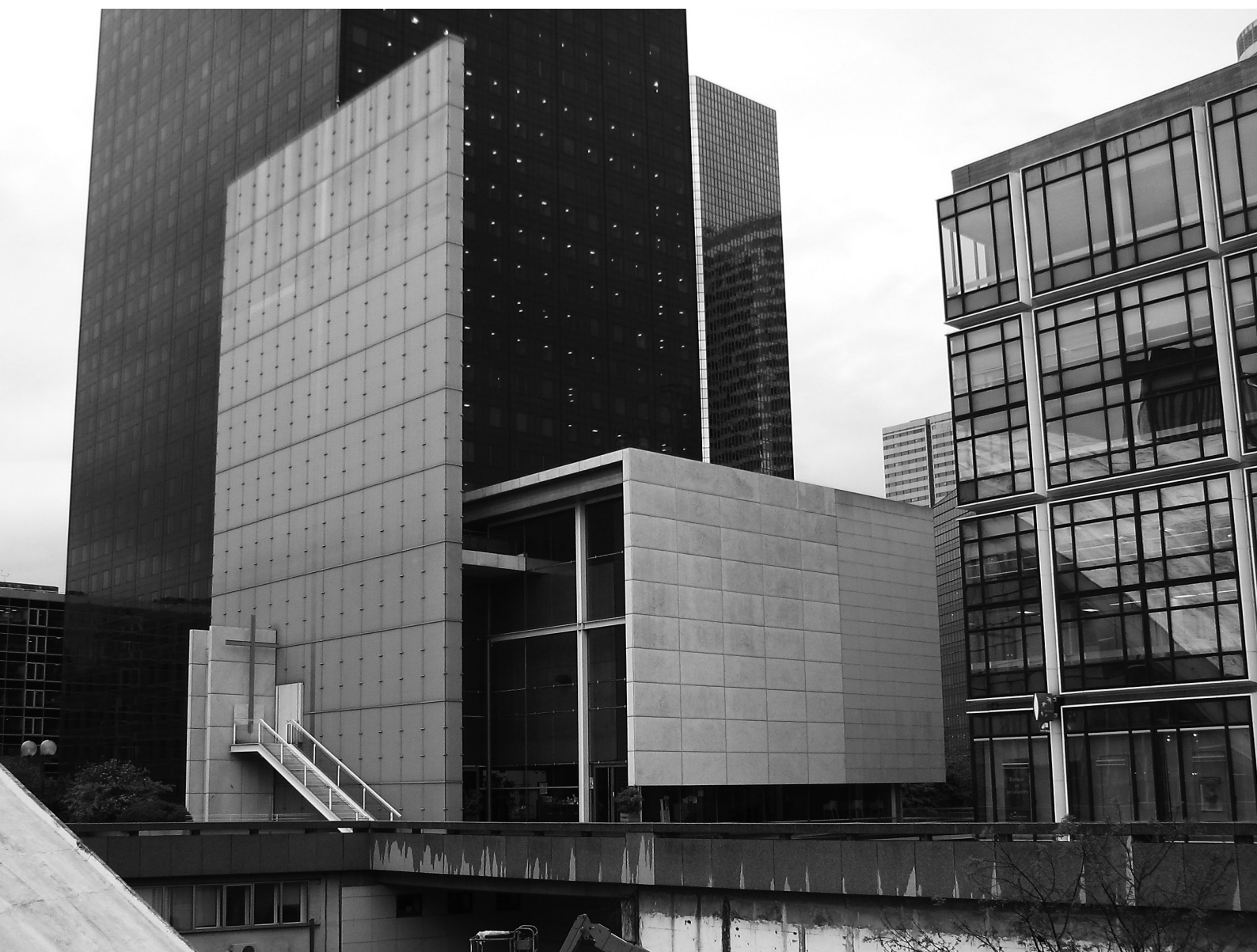
Fig. 8 Franck Hammoutene, Notre Dame de la Pentecòte church, 2001, Paris; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Notre_Dame_de_Pentecote.jpg (online: 5 XI 2017)

or even "non-denominational" temples, such as **Tadao Ando's 1995 Meditation Space at the UNESCO Building in Paris** [Fig. 1] or the highway World Religions Chapel in the Swiss St. Gotard Pass (1998) by Pascale Guignard and Stefan Saner[30].

There may be justified doubts as to whether the problem of transcendence actually went beyond the circle of philosophers and became the content of architecture, but as with the philosophy of *sacrum* and its applications in many areas of culture, evidence can easily be found in the statements of the creators themselves, their principals or commentators in professional writings. So Mario Botta (born 1943), an author of a whole range of churches, including the large-size cathedral in Évry in the suburbs of Paris, clearly stated that his intention was not to worship God, but to create a building where the most primeval religious needs of man would be realized. In the place arranged by him, the contemporary individual is to find the emptiness, the abyss that only pre-articulates itself and which – paradoxically – is the base stabilizing human existence. With some surprise can be taken the opinion of Guy Herbulot (born 1925), bishop of the Diocese of Évry in 1978–2000, who said that this building was primarily a sign of opening the individual to what is outside of them[31]. Such a position, disregarding the reference to a purely Christian deity, should, however, be accepted with understanding in a town, where Catholics constitute only a fraction of the population confessing various non-Christian religions or indifferent to all denominations. This would be just one of the many evidences that a Christian church was built for the idea of transcendence of the limitations of the earthly existence. Jose Rafael Moneo (born 1937) commented almost identically on his Los Angeles Cathedral (1996–2002), declaring that it was created as a place to connect people of different denominations through the idea of transcendence[32]. It is not then by chance that Ricardo Porro, characterizing the forest cemetery and two cemetery chapels of Gunnar Asplund in Stockholm (1920 and 1940), titled his essay on that subject *Return to Transcendence*[33]. As a consequence, it was almost necessary for Steven Schroeder, an author of an outstanding scholarly work devoted to sacred architecture in the second half of the 20ᵗʰ century, to put forward the claim that a church should now be a place where human existence opens to transcendence[34]. Finally, it should be mentioned an opinion of a sociologist, who wrote: "Human life is driven and hold in the course by the urge to cross. Transcending – transgressing – is the modality of human existence in the world"[35].

The church by Hammoutene was erected in a business district of large corporations and although it is a dozen or so times smaller than office buildings around, it was built according to the same principles of architectural modernism[36]. Modernity, which was more a set of ideas than a social situation, was extremely often represented by followers who proclaimed their truths as priests of the new reality.

[31] **P. Boitel**, *Évry, la petite dernierè*, "Notre Histoire" 1996, No. 135, p. 59–61, for: **I. Linder–Gaillard**, *The Aesthetics of Contemporary French Catholic Churches: Fortresses of Resistance?*, [in:] *Aesthetics as a religious factor in Eastern and Western Christianity*, ed. **W. van den Bercken**, **J. Sutton**, "Eastern Christian Studies" 2005, No. 6, p. 234, compare also: **C. Wąs**, *Antynomie…*, p. 125.

[32] *Ibidem*, p. 128.

[33] **R. Porro**, *Retour a la transcendance. Cimetière au sud de Stockholm*, "Techniques & Architecture" 1992/1993, No. 405, p. 92–96.

[34] **S. J. Schloeder**, *op. cit.*, s. 46.

[35] **Z. Bauman**, *Społeczeństwo w stanie oblężenia*, trans. J. Margański, Sic!, Warszawa 2007, p. 257.

[36] The place of this object among others Parisian churches of similar character, including particularly Notre Dame de l'Arche d'Alliance by the "Architecture Studio", the chapel at Gare Montparnasse, the Notre Dame de la Sagesse church by Pierre Louis Faloci, Notre–Dame de l'Esperance by Bruno Legrand, or the Saint Luc Church by Pierre Henri and Christian Basset has been characterized by **B. Malinowska–Petelenz**, see *eadem*, *Sacrum oszczędne*, "Czasopismo Techniczne. Architektura" 2010, No. 14, p. 193. For the church of Hammoutene, see. also **C. Wąs**, *Antynomie…*, p. 268–270.

[37] **W. Leśnikowski**, *Kościół na La Défense*, "Architektura & Biznes" 2001, No. 12, p. 35. See also: **M. Feldmann**, **W. Laufs**, *Die Stahl– und Glaskonstruktionen des Neubaus der "Église Notre Dame de Pentecôte" in Paris–La Défense*, "Der Stahlbau" 2001, No. 11; **M. Feldmann**, **M. Baitinger**, **B. Vaudeville**, *Le grand écran de verre de la nouvelle église Notre Dame de Pentecôte à Paris–La Défense*, "Construction métallique" 2002, No. 2; **S. Piccardi**, *Religiosità urbana: Notre Dame de Pentecôte*, Paris la Défense, "L'Arca" 2003, No. 183.

[38] **R. Volp**, *Der Ökumenische Pavillon auf der EXPO 2000. Das Ergebnis eins Architekturwettbewerbs*, "Kunst und Kirche" 1998, No. 2, p. 114–115; **W. Zahner**, *Die kirchlichen Pavillons auf der Expo 2000 in Hannover*, "Kunst und Kirche" 2000, No. 3, p. 271–274; **G. Wegner**, **H. Hischler**, *Die EXPO–Kirche. Der Christus Pavillon*, Regensburg 2000; *Europäischer Kirchenbau…*, p. 302–305. After the exposition in Hannover the object was, in 2001, transferred and reconstructed in a modified form in the Cistercian abbey of Volkenroda, Thuringia; compare **K.–H. Michel**, *Christus–Pavillon – Volkenroda*, Schnell & Steiner, Regensburg 2004. The above–made description of the pavillon is based on theses and formulations presented earlier in **C. Wąs**', *Teoria światów równoległych. O wielorakości tendencji współczesnej architektury sakralnej*, "Quart. Kwartalnik Instytutu Historii Sztuki Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego" 2007, No. 3, p. 7; *idem*, *Antynomie …*, p. 259–265.

In the field of architecture, similar behaviors can be noted, and Le Corbusier, Nicolaus Pevsner or Henry-Russell Hitchcock's writings often had a nature of propaganda works of desirable progressive morality to cause a new system of social organization. Modernism has also become a part of new trends in Christian theology, and despite some meanders in its development, it won during the Vatican II. Often reluctantly revealed interconnectedness between the cult of modernism and the doctrines of Western Christianity, was the source of the message of the bishop of Nanterre district, François Favreau (born 1929), a hierarch associated with building of the temple in the business district who said: "We wanted to have architecture in the pattern of surrounding buildings"[37].

This demand clearly reflects the relationship between worship for the "new times", new tendencies in religion, and extremely modern forms of construction. The structure of the building is hammered by a dozen or so thick concrete pylons in the underground part of the district, where roads and metro lines run. On the pillars a concrete platform was put, over which a two-storey church was built. The upper part of the church was a cube covered by gray-green plexiglass plates. A distinctive part of the temple is, placed in front of it, a wall of translucent organic glass plates, about 0,8 meters thick and 30 meters high. On the big screen from side of the wide road of La Défense, the sign of the cross is visible. The interior of a small aisle of the nature of the conference room is illuminated by a frosted glass wall behind an altar. Impression of anonymity and coolness is reinforced by the gray cover of the walls of metal sheets. Even the arrangement of the seats is against all habits – they are set identically to the layout of the bench in the British Parliament: in two rows, back to the longer walls of the nave, so in such a way that the assembled look at each other. The erected object was endowed with historical signs of the Christian religion (a cross placed on the outside and inside), but brought to an exceptionally discreetly discernible formula. One may have the impression that in this work it was concluded that even after exhausting the formulas of an existing religion, respect for the mystery of Being and the necessity of celebrating it were not lost at all. The church is extremely rarely visited, not only by the not so sentimental staff of the surrounding offices, but also by just few tourists following the main street. But for most potential users, it seems to be a welcome sign of the infinity of the world, and the silence of the few who enter into its interior becomes like a form of prayer. The architect raised this church not so much for a specific God or holiness, but as a place of temporary detachment from everyday life, pure meditation without a definite religious basis. It is understandable that the pretext was a Christian building, but the work is in fact a pilgrimage temple for modern nomads, who are not permanently engraved in any religious, national or social system.

Cezary Wąs / **Holy Place – Sacred Space – Area of Transcendence. Transformations of the concept of cult sites in the 20th century**

/65/

Fig. 9 Meinhard von Gerkan, Christ Pavilion Expo 2000, Hannover, 2000, actually: Volkenroda, Thuryngia; http://www.gmp-architekten.com/typo3temp/_processed_/csm_KF373-68_7050c653e0.jpg (online: 5 XI 2017)

[39] **K. Michalski**, *Heidegger i filozofia współczesna*, ed. II, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1998, p. 203.

[40] **B. Pastuschka** *et al.*, *Geometrie der Stille*, Verlag Das Beispiel, Darmstadt 2002, p. 33. In another passage of his statement, von Gerkan proclaimed: "Many traditional ideas are no longer valid today" (p. 18) and claimed that there are no existing obligatory patterns for architects in the field of sacred architecture (p. 18–19).

[41] *Ibidem*, p. 19.

[42] *Ibidem*, p. 27.

Christ's Pavilion was erected for the Expo in Hannover in 2000[38]. The object was located in close proximity to the main square of the world exhibition and at the first glance it could be treated as a work similar to the exhibition facilities of large companies. This impression would not be quite false because the intention of the principals, i.e. the representatives of the two major denominations of the Christian Churches in Germany, was to build a pavilion (not a church!), which in this particular setting would represent the actuality of the message of Christ. The pavilion did not receive a specific function – it was meant to serve a variety of activities, from devotions to cultural events. Its construction was based on an exterior truss that was a carrier for several hundred marble panels forming the facade. The light penetrating through the marble had a very unreal character, becoming the main factor shaping the ambience of the interior. The structure of the building and the way in which the basic materials were used in it, are somehow of the nature of the advertising of products of the steel and glass industry whose representatives were the main sponsors of the object. The feeling when being in the building oscillates between the admiration for its rationality and the use of materials, and the sense of being in the mysterious space of a cosmic temple, not necessarily of the Christian confession. In one corner of the building, a crucifix in the glass cage was placed, the only evidence of belonging to the historically determined religion. The transparent container made the main image of the Christian religion a museum exhibit, carrying the entire religious system into the area of past issues. Besides that modest symbol, von Gerkan's building, with its architectural and aesthetic values, was in no way related to the Christian idea of God, but it also did not use the concept of *sacrum* – universal sacredness popularized by religious scholars. This was not by chance because, in his theoretical statements von Gerkan clearly marked his separate position, maybe the closest to transcendence of Heidegger's philosophy[39]. The architect repeatedly proclaimed his rejection of the traditional semantics and symbolism of the church as deprived of any current validity. "It was clear to us that we did not want to design a church in the traditional sense" – he concluded[40]. A consequence of the recognition of the architectural traditions of the formation of the ecclesial space as, in the large extent, a reservoir of errors, was the adoption of a phenomenological approach and the search for the essence of the task entrusted. As the development of these ideas, it was accepted that the value permeating the history of sacred architecture, including its non-European varieties, is "sublimity".

> When we take into account also buildings of other religions, such as Islam or Buddhism, where other spatial solutions were used [than in the Christian circle], all these buildings have finally something in common. It is common for them to feel an exemptional state through their space

– says one of the statements on the subject[41]. "We wanted to give to people […] a feeling of the sublime" – wrote von Gerkan elsewhere[42]. Sublimity in the context of all his statement seems to be an aspect of a particular way he perceives transcendence. The proof of such a view can be found especially in Jeane-Françoise Lyotard's philosophy, where the transformation of the Kantian category of sublimity into an artistic tool of depicting otherness and impossibility was very evident[43]. Keeping in mind the view that in the case of an object in Hanover, "the issue was not a building that should serve ritual functions, but a work that made its own sense by itself"[44], allows assumed that the used form (sublimity) has no external (thus transcendental) sense, but it itself is a sense or includes it in itself[45]. Form is a sense, and it does not serve anything beyond itself, not so much it points to transcendence, but reveals its possibility in the form itself. Thus, what is most external (as traditionally we could understand ontically conceived transcendence), is in the case of the von Gerkan's building the interior of the used form.

The above-mentioned varieties of locating cult activities in the 20th and 21st centuries, once centered around the concept of holy place, later of sacral space, and nowadays most often regarded as areas of transcendence, never occurred in their "pure" logical form. In specific works, their distinctive features were common, but rarely raised the objections of even more inquisitive critics. According to Robert Venturi's doctrine, we are dealing here with a "contradiction and complexity" characteristic of our time. Traditionally understood sacredness gave partially place to the cult of *sacrum* (which never became an official religion itself), and in other cases the cult of transcendence became an important aspect of formally Christian temples, connecting with them ideologically despite enormous doctrinal differences. It also draws attention to the fact that today's history of religion and theology does not yet have elaborate research methods that would allow for more precise statements of more complex, but also not institutionalized forms of contemporary religiosity.

References

1. *Europäischer Kirchenbau 1950–2000*, ed. **W. J. Stock**, Prestel, München 2003.

2. **Głowacki Maciej**, *7 planów Schwarza – kształty w świecie idei*, [in:] *Budownictwo sakralne i monumentalne 2004*, Wydawnictwo Politechniki Białostockiej, Białystok 2004.

3. **Iwaszkiewicz-Wronikowska Bożena**, *Domus-ecclesia-aedes. Powstawanie świątyni chrześcijańskiej*, [in:] *Sympozja Kazimierskie; poświęcone kulturze świata późnego antyku i wczesnego chrześcijaństwa*, ed. **B. Iwaszkiewicz-Wronikowska**, Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Lublin 1998.

[43] See **J. Rogucki**, *J.–F. Lyotard, Piękno w obliczu wzniosłości "nieprzedsta–wialnego"*, "Dyskurs. Zeszyty Naukowo––Artystyczne Akademii Sztuk Pięknych we Wrocławiu" 2005, No. 3.

[44] **B. Pastuschka** *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

[45] **C. Wąs**, *Antynomie…*, p. 265.

4. **Kidder-Smith George Everard**, *The new churches of Europe*, Holt, Rinehardt and Winston, New York 1964.

5. **Linder-Gaillard Inge**, *The Aestetics of Contemporary French Catholic Churches: Fortresses of Resistance?*, [in:] *Aesthetics as a religious factor in Eastern and Western Christianity*, ed. **W. van den Bercken**, **J. Sutton**, "Eastern Christian Studies" 2005, no. 6.

6. **Reymond Bernard**, *L'architecture religieuse des protestants;histoire, caractéristique, problèmes actuels*, Labor et Fides, Genève 1996.

7. **Schloeder Steven Joseph**, *Architecture in Communion. Implementing the Second Vatican Council through Liturgy and Architecture*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1998.

8. **Schwarz Rudolf**, *Vom Bau der Kirche*, Werkbund Verlag, Würzburg 1938, Schneider, Heidelberg 1947^{II}, Verlag Anton Pustet, Salzburg 1998 ^{III}.

9. **Stock Wolfgang Jean**, *Architekturführer. Christliche Sakralbauten in Europa seit 1950*, Prestel Verlag, München 2004.

10. **Wąs Cezary**, *Sacrum w architekturze*, [in:] *Nadprzyrodzone*, ed. **E. Przybył**, Nomos, Kraków 2003.

11. **Wąs Cezary**, *Antynomie współczesnej architektury sakralnej*, Muzeum Architektury, Wrocław 2008.

12. **Węcławowicz-Gyurkovich Ewa**, *Polska architektura sakralna. Tradycja i współczesność. Kierunki poszukiwań twórczych w najnowszej architekturze*, "Nasza Przeszłość" 1992, no. 78.

———————————————

———————————————

PhD Cezary Wąs, wascezar@gmail.com

Assistant Professor at the Institute of Art History, University of Wroclaw. Curator of the Museum of Architecture. Author of the books: *Antinomies of the contemporary sacred architecture* (Wrocław 2008), *Architecture and deconstruction. The case of Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi* (Wrocław 2015) and dozens of articles on phenomena of the ancient and modern culture.

Summary
CEZARY WAS (University of Wrocław) / Holy Place – Sacred Space – Area of Transcendence.
Transformations of the concept of cult sites in the 20th century

In the concept of space devoted to places of religious worship in the 20th century there were changes that lowered the rank of the oldest traditions. In addition to understanding a space in which a temple was erected as a "holy place", the concepts of "sacred space" and "area of transcendence" emerged.

The most enduring custom of locating a sanctuary was linked to the necessity of commemorating a place of a direct manifestation of a divine being, as described in the Book of Genesis (Genesis 28: 16–19), where the Patriarch Jacob dedicated a stone that became the instrument of God's revelation and made it the prototype temple. A similar custom was also characteristic of pagan religions, but already in the fourth century it was incorporated into the Christian rite. The practice of shaping a building as a place directly connected with a holy being was also consolidated by the rule, characteristic of the beginning of the Christian architecture, of consecrating a temple only after placing the remains of the saints in it. In Christianity of the West, the rejection of the concept of the sanctity of a church building was rare, but it became evident in the architecture of Protestant denominations. In the Catholic and Orthodox trends, the aspirations to emphasize the holiness of a cult building were manifested by separating it from the secular space and by distinguishing it with artistic forms and symbols.

As regards the places of worship in the second half of the 20th century, the term "sacral architecture" and sometimes also "sacral space" became popular. It should be noted, however, that the concept of sacredness comes from religious studies and presupposes the functioning of *sacrum* as the universal holiness that precedes the divinity of a particular religion. The concept of sacrum has gained enormous importance in the 20th century, although it was inconsistent with the theological foundations of Christianity. The consequence of the search for the holiness over specific religious denominations was to reduce it to the essential or primordial values. It brought such an understanding closer to the aspirations characteristic of the art of avant-garde modernism. It can be said that any tendencies of the architecture of radical modernism, based on the simplification of forms, especially their geometrisation or archaization, are particularly suitable for the creation of religious settings for cult sites, where the inclinations with regard to the conception of sacrum dominated the Christian content. A prominent example of such situation is the chapel built by Mies van der Rohe at the Illinois Institute of Technology campus in Chicago.

Some of the church buildings of the late 20ᵗʰ and early 21ˢᵗ centuries, built for the needs of Christian churches in the West, express the reflection that the essence of human existence is the constant pursuit of transgressing the intellectual or spiritual *status quo*. Within this concept, transcendence was not understood as a divine being, but as a process of transgression directed at infinity and giving a sense and a value to an individual's life. In this situation, the architecture erected for the needs of particular denominations and created by religiously indifferent designers became a space that reminds about other human destiny than merely rational. In objects of this kind it was shown that pure efficiency does not exhaust the most important modalities of human existence. The ideological content of the concept of transcendence was not in line with the traditional message of the Christian religion, but when they were enabled to find their expression in new church buildings, they included their seemingly religiously indifferent followers in the long chain of searchers of the final dimensions of human fate