ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL'S CHURCH IN VILNIUS: A STUDY IN META-CODAL SYMBOLISM OF CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE

Gytis ORŽIKAUSKAS

Faculty of Architecture, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Pylimo st. 26/1, Vilnius, Lithuania
E-mails: gytisorzikauskas@yahoo.co.uk; gytis.orzikauskas@heritage.lt

Abstract. The paper examines Christian architecture from the perspective of "meta-codal function", i.e. through examination of architectural symbolism expressed solely by architectural means. Emphasizing symbolic and semantic content of architecture, the paper offers a broader research field of architectural artistry by using a wider iconographic comparison. As a representative of baroque architecture and the most prominent example of architectural symbolism, St. Peter and St. Paul's Church in Vilnius (1668–1702) has been selected for the research. The iconographic programme of this church is compared to most distinct iconographic themes identified through the analysis of some examples of historic Christian architecture. By this method, the research detaches from the usual stylistic analysis and poses the most basic question in architectural artistry: is architecture capable of expressing the independent artistic content which can translate more than architecture's general appearance.

Keywords: historic Christian architecture, meta-codal function, architectural symbolism.

Introduction

In architectural theory, the research of semantics in sacral architecture dates back to only the 19th century. At the time, rather primitive explanations were used, for example, August Reichensperger (1808–1865) wrote that churches of Gothic style are the pure embodiment of piety. In his work, vertical spires were taken as an expression of desire to become closer to God, and the contrast between a dark interior and light coming through stained glass windows was associated with medieval mysticism (Reichensperberger 1854). The research of architectural semantics in the 19th and 20th centuries was soon limited by a common preconception that architecture is basically an asemantic art. It was thought to be neither communicative nor representing anything except for itself, as described in "La Correspondence des arts" by Étienne Souriau (1892–1979) (Wallis 1975: 40; Souriau 1947: 969).

However at the beginning of the 20th century, some authors tried to encourage the use of more complex methods of research into architectural artistry. Aesthetic theorist Jan Mukařovský (1871–1975) marked out four functional horizons of architecture, which included the immediate practical function, the historical function relating to previous modes of building, the social function relating to the social status and economic resources of the builder and the individual function relating to individual style of the building (Mukařovský 1978: 241–244). As one can notice, Mukařovský excluded architectural symbolism as an inadequate research subject. However, Donald Preziosi (born in 1941) continued researching multi-layered functions of architecture with condensed five functions of architecture. In his opinion, the expressive function of architecture manifests in the personal style, the mode of architectonic self-representation of a builder. The conative function of architecture suggests orientations, spatial interpretations and behaviour to its user. The phatic function is connected to the environmental framing of interpersonal interactions, or architectural "territoriality". The aesthetic function manifests when architecture is oriented toward its own mode of construction. At last, the meta-codal function is realised through historical references or "quotations" (Preziosi 1979a: 49–55, 1979b: 68–72). One of the most prominent authors of post-modern architectural theory Charles Jencks suggested, that architectural forms should also be analysed by multiple means. The author claimed that in order to understand

what Nelson's column really means, one should ana-
lyse its physical–social context (Trafalgar Square as a
political centre), semantics (naval victories, the perso-
nality of Admiral Nelson) and syntax (standing alone,
surrounded by a vast space and fountains) and histori-
cal connotations (phallic symbol, three classical orders,
a column as a feature of classical temples) (Jencks 1991:
49). However, the biggest part of the author's research
into architectural semantics is devoted to analysis of
historical architectural styles reused as quotations in
post-modern architecture. The result of Preziosi's and
Jencks' research provides an opinion that semantics
of architecture is limited only to the ability of self-re-
ference, i.e. reuse of past architectural formulas. This
only supports the idea that architecture has no other
artistic subtext or representation than its own form.

Christian architecture, however, can prove this opi-
nion wrong, as it has a strong connection with trans-
cendental sacralisation of space. In Judaism, Solomon's
Temple was first treated as a gathering place for the
religious community. Those who did not meet the
fixed standards of this community were left outside
the House of God. Christianity changed this attitude
drastically: the House of God became a metaphor, a
promise of the Heavenly Jerusalem, accessible to eve-
ryone who worships God, no matter in groups or indi-
vidually (Sverdiolas 1996: 134–135). For the very first
time in the Western culture, a temple was treated firstly
as a mystical place, which had only to be channelled
down by architectural means. In most cases, sacral
architecture has the ability to transfer much deeper
independent artistic subtext, and it should be treated as
a major factor of meta-codal function of architecture.

In most cases, the history of architecture is written
down as history of form and style. This way, the history
of ideas and narrative is very much forgotten or treated
as an irrelevant field of research. Aspects and problems
of sacral architecture in Lithuania have been covered
by a number of analytic articles, such as "Reformed
Liturgy and Sacral Architecture" by Edmundas Arbas–
Arbačiauskas (1990), "Some Features of Evolution of
Lithuanian Sacral Architecture in 20th–21st Centuries"
by Linas Krūgelis (2009), "Sacrality and Hierarchy of
Structure: the Reasons of Conflict between Reformers
and Traditionalists" by Rugilė Žadeikytė (2013), "The
Church – between the House of God and the Object
of Architecture" by Eugenijus Gūzas (2013) and so on;
however, most of these writings are again dedicated to
the analysis of styles and influences. Some works by
Rimantas Buivydas are mainly dedicated to symbolism
of architecture in Lithuania: the monograph "Esoteric
World of Symbols" (1995) and articles "Towards clas-
sification of sacral architecture" (2006, "Urbanistika

ir architektūra"), "Symbol in Architecture: from
Individuality to Universality" (2005, "Urbanistika ir
architektūra") and others. This particular article is de-
voted to explaining the artistic subtext of St. Peter and
St. Paul's Church in Vilnius (1668–1702, architects Jan
Zaor and Giambattista Frediani), which can be named
the most striking example of historic Christian archi-
tecture in Lithuania. Rich in architectural and artis-
tic influences, architecture of St. Peter and St. Paul's
Church expresses some main themes of Christian sym-
bolism. By methods of inductive reasoning and icono-
graphic comparison, this article attempts to analyse the
meta-codal function of sacral architecture through this
particular church, in which architectural semantics is
compared to some motifs of Christian symbolism.

The iconographic key to traditional symbolism of Christian churches

In early Byzantine theology, a dome symbolised
heaven because early Christianity pictured God as
a circle or a sphere rather than a human form. The
meaning behind this is explained by the 12th cen-
tury manuscript, which claims: "God is an intelli-
gible sphere, whose centre is everywhere, and whose
circumference is nowhere" (Gurevičius 1989: 82;
Biedermann 2002: 37). In Christian architecture, a
dome was firstly used in the church of Hagia Sophia,
which was built in Constantinople in 532–537 funded
by Emperor Justinian. At the time, religion and po-
sition of the emperor were tightly connected, so for
means of political propaganda, Emperor Justinian
tried to surpass the old Solomon's Temple by building
the new sacral centre of Christianity.

The construction of the church was unique: it had
a circular dome set over a square base, which was an
unknown scheme in previous architectural styles. The
whole weight of the dome had to be supported on four
massive pillars alone because outer walls of the church
were designed hollow. For this scheme, the builders
of the church had to invent a new type of construc-
tion – pendentives – in order to successfully transfer
the weight of the dome onto these pillars (Fig. 1).

However, the symbolism of these four piers was
taken from Solomon's Temple itself. The Holy of
Holies in Solomon's Temple was decorated with four
pillars and the veil adorned with images of four an-
gels, each with four faces: a human, an eagle, a lion
and an ox (Ramonienė 1997: 223–224). This symbol
was first described in the Old Testament. In his vi-
sion, Ezekiel called it *merkabah*, i.e. the carriage of
God, drawn by four animals, each with four wings
and four faces of a human, an eagle, a lion and an ox
(Ezekiel 1:1–3:27). Next, these same beasts appear in

the Book of Revelation of the New Testament: they accompany the Throne of God during the Apocalypse (Revelation 4). Since the 5th century, the symbol was given the name of a tetramorph (Biedermann 2002: 117). Through numerous mystical associations such te-tramorph creatures became emblematic signs of Four Evangelists. Starting from Byzantine and Ottonian art, tetramorph creatures accompany the image of Majestas Domini, i.e. Christ as the ruler of the universe (e.g. the late 5th century ivory sheet from Ravenna, kept at the treasury of Milan Cathedral; "Codex Amiatinus" of the year 692, kept at Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence; the drawing of Christ the Sun of the 8th century, kept at the National Library of France; the 7th century relief from the Basilica of San Marino; the Genesis embroidery of the Girona Cathedral, made in 1050; enamel medallion from Conques of the year 1100, kept at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; fresco of the Church of St. Clement of Tahull of the year 1123; "Liber scivias" treatise of 1190–1220 by Hildegard von Bingen; the canopy from St. Martin Cathedral in Tost, kept at the National Art Museum of Catalonia, made in 1220; "Horae ad usum parisiensem" treatise of 1434–1480, kept at the Department of Manuscripts of the National Library of France; the illuminated ma-nuscript by Maître François, made in 1475 and kept in Paris, etc.).

However, the image of a tetramorph was already known to the ancient pagan religion. This imagery had been influenced by pagan beliefs about for guardians of corners of the Earth or four holders of the sky. The bestial form of those guardians came from zodiac signs of Taurus, Leo, Aquarius and Scorpio (in ancient times, the Eagle was used instead the Scorpio) (Biedermann 2002: 117). Various ancient Roman images depicted gods like Mithras, Aion, Zervana (Zurvan), Chrone or Phanes Protogonos in an egg shaped nimbus, sur-rounded by four faces from each side of the world (see Fig. 2). The primordial universe was imagined being round and a rectangle symbolised four main coordinates of the Earth (Biedermann 2002: 194). The connection between a circle and a square symbolised the unity between macrocosm and microcosm, to both of which access was granted to the primordial god, just as to Christ in later Christian art (see Fig. 2). Correspondingly, the symbol of four guardians sup-porting corners of the Earth was turned into the sym-bol of four Gospels supporting Christianity.

Different from Judaism, the four beasts of a tetra-morph were considered to be seraphim. (Biedermann 2002: 34). As a coincidence, after the earthquake of the 14th century, the pendentives of Hagia Sophia were decorated with images of four seraphim. It would later

become a wide custom to decorate pendentives with images of Four Evangelists, especially in European Byzantine and Romanesque churches, e.g. Chapel of Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna, built by same Emperor Justinian; the 11th century dome of Baptistery of Padua Cathedral; the 12th century St. Mark's Basilica in Venice; the 12th century Church of Virgin Mary the Blessed of Gelati Monastery in Georgia; the 12th cen-tury Palatine Chapel in Palermo, etc. The custom would be later transferred to all other architectural styles of Christian churches which featured domes: e.g. the 13th century Gothic Church of St. Nicolas in Blois, France; the 16th century Renaissance Parma Cathedral and St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican; the 17th century baroque church of Les Invalides in Paris, etc. In such a way, the mystical unity between macrocosm and microcosm, expressed through symbols of a circular dome (God) and a square (earthly world) and tetramorph guardians on supporting pendentives, became a universal meta-code of Christian architecture (Figs 1, 2).

Another prominent symbol was a bipolar under-standing of life, best expressed in Piazza dei Miracoli ensemble in Pisa (built in the 12th–14th centuries). In the Middle Ages, the majority of Christian churches had burial sites; consequently, according to the tradi-tion, these churches were built outside city walls. The only place forbidden for burial was baptisteries; how-ever, it is a paradox that a round shape of traditional Italian baptisteries was taken directly from mauso-leums of ancient Roman and Carolingian periods (Stalley 1999: 60).

However, one can notice that in classical times, round temples were mainly devoted to goddesses as a circle was often used to symbolise a womb (e.g. temple of Aphrodite in Knidos, temple of Venus in Baalbek, temple of Athena in Delphi, temple of Minerva in Rome, temple of Tyche (Fortuna) in Agora of Side). In other case they were devoted to gods who earned di-vinity through a mortal life (f. e. temple of Asclepius in Epidauros, temple of Hercules in Rome). Thus, round temples were traditionally accompanied with themes of birth and rebirth.

These themes were also implanted into round Christian sacral buildings. Both themes of birth and death perfectly suited baptisteries because in the Middle Ages, baptism was considered a mystical death in secular life and rebirth in Christ (as taught by St. Paul). Baptism was not performed on any random day but only three days a year, and one of them was Easter – the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ (Stalley 1999: 60).

In the Medieval concept of history, the events of the Old Testament were considered symmetrical to the

events of the New Testament (Gurevičius 1989: 117). The Mother of Christ was respectively compared with the bride from the Song of Songs (the Song of Solomon). In this hymn, the neck of the bride is compared with an ivory tower; thus, starting from the 12th century, an ivory tower became a symbol of purity and Virgin Mary (Bull 1999: 29). Hence, the archetype of a virgin imprisoned in a tower was created. The bell tower also had another important role: it helped to understand time, which in medieval time was measured only by clergy. To mark time for common folk, tower bells rang seven times a day. In addition, they also rang to mark important events of people's life, e.g. somebody's death (Gurevičius 1989: 96). Differently than in the British Isles, separate round bell towers were uncommon to the Medieval Italian architecture. The famous tower of Pisa could only be interpreted as an iconographic symbol of what the church was firstly named after, namely, the Ascension (i.e. resurrection) of Virgin Mary.

Entering through the churchyard of Pisa Cathedral, the baptistery built in 1152 is the very first visual symbol of a secular death and the beginning of Christian life. At the other end of the complex, the famous bell tower is seen, once again marking both death and resurrection. The theme of resurrection is even more strengthened by the fountain placed just beside the tower, as the Fountain of Life was an important iconographic motif of eternal life in the Medieval theology. One can right away notice that Pisa Cathedral is strictly aligned with the main axis of the world. In contrast to that, other main buildings of Piazza dei Miracoli are placed freely, without any fixed axis or order (Fig. 3). Such composition of these buildings could be purely visual: all buildings were placed to be seen right away from the entrance to the church yard. The symbolic bipolar narrative of secular life from birth to death and the narrative of mystical Christian life from death and resurrection in Christ to the final salvation could be created by relating separate buildings – the baptistery, the Cathedral and the bell tower (Fig. 3). In his research of religious practice, Mircea Eliade noticed that one common element of the ritual is the reduction of an individual to a certain primordial state, and one's sacred rebirth or mystical revival. Saints often had to suffer the death of the flesh and the conversion to a mystical being (Eliade 1967: 82–83, 1951: 49, 63). The composition of separate buildings of Pisa Cathedral could be used to illustrate this Christian practice.

The third important aspect of traditional symbolism expressed in Christian churches was the duality of soul. The Gothic Chartres Cathedral of the 13th century has it spires decorated with signs of the Sun and the Moon. As we all know, these are emblematic signs of Virgin Mary, as she appears with in the Sun and the Moon under her feet during the Apocalypse (see Fig. 4) (Revelation 12: 1–2). However, the symbolism of the Sun and the Moon in Chartres Cathedral is expressed even further. Until the 17th century, the Gothic rose windows were originally called oculus, i.e. "eyes". Some Medieval and Renaissance images depicted Sol Iustitiae – the Sun of Justice as an eye with Christ or his substitution symbol (lamb or pelican) in his pupil (e.g. the 8th century Commentary on the Apocalypse manuscript in Madrid; paintings "The Seven Deadly Sins" and "St. John the Evangelist on the Island of Patmos" by Hieronymus Bosch).

The symbolism of the Moon in Chartres Cathedral is represented by the labyrinth, which was installed around the year 1200. The perimeter of the Chartres labyrinth is decorated with 112 rays. The labyrinth is visually divided into four parts with 28 rays for each part – the number equal to the approximate number of days in the lunar cycle (Critchlow *et al.* 1973: 11–22).

The image of Theseus fighting the Minotaur at the labyrinth of Crete was one of favourite images reused for decoration of early Christian churches, as a labyrinth – which is so easy to enter but complicated to exit – was understood as a metaphor of life. Labyrinths have been installed in the 6th century Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna; later – in Santa Maria in Trastevere Church in Rome (destroyed after the 19th century restoration); in the 10th or 11th century in San Michele Maggiore, Pavia; and in the 11th or 12th century in Lucca Cathedral di San Martino. During the time of crusades, these decorative mazes were given a new purpose: in prayers, they became known as Ways of Sorrow. As a result, the ancient Greek word "labyrinth" (which was still used in the Carolingian era) was completely forgotten and replaced with a new name rues de Jerusalem, or leagues. The length of Chartres leagues is 666 feet, the number of the Apocalyptical Beast (Lanciani 1893: 91).

The labyrinth itself is placed just under the western façade of the church, which again traditionally is devoted to scenes of the Apocalypse. If superimposed, the place of Chartres labyrinth in the plan of the church matches the place of the rose window in the façade almost perfectly (Fig. 4). This dual symbolism of the Sun and the Moon could again be symbols of the Apocalyptical Mary cloaked in the Sun (light from the stained glass window) with the Moon (labyrinth) under her feet, but the contrasting arrangement of these elements could also stress the cosmological polarization between top and bottom, life and death, which we know was contemplated in the Medieval period. This symbolism was also stressed in other Gothic churches, e.g.
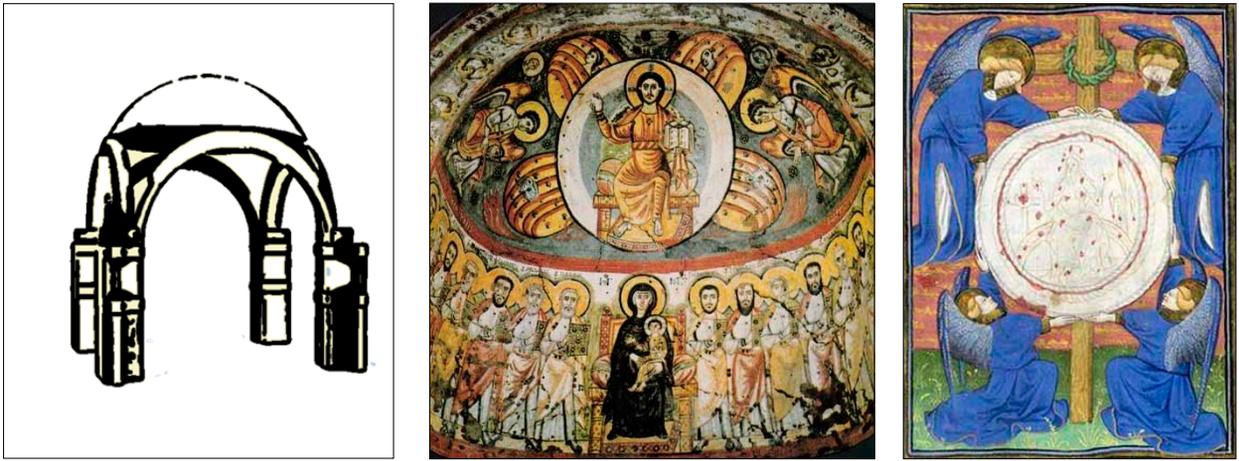
Fig. 1. Main constructional scheme of Hagia Sophia built in the 6th century, in comparison with traditional Christian iconography of a tetramorph: the 4th century fresco at the Monastery of St. Apollo in Egypt (middle) and the 15th century manuscript "Horae ad usum Parisiensem". *Sources*: http://st-takla.org/Gallery/Saints-and-Figures/Twelve-Disciples/12-Apostles--12-Depiction-of-Christ-enthroned-Monastery-of-Apollo-in-Bawit-Egypt.html; https://www.pinterest.com/pin/323414816961733867/.
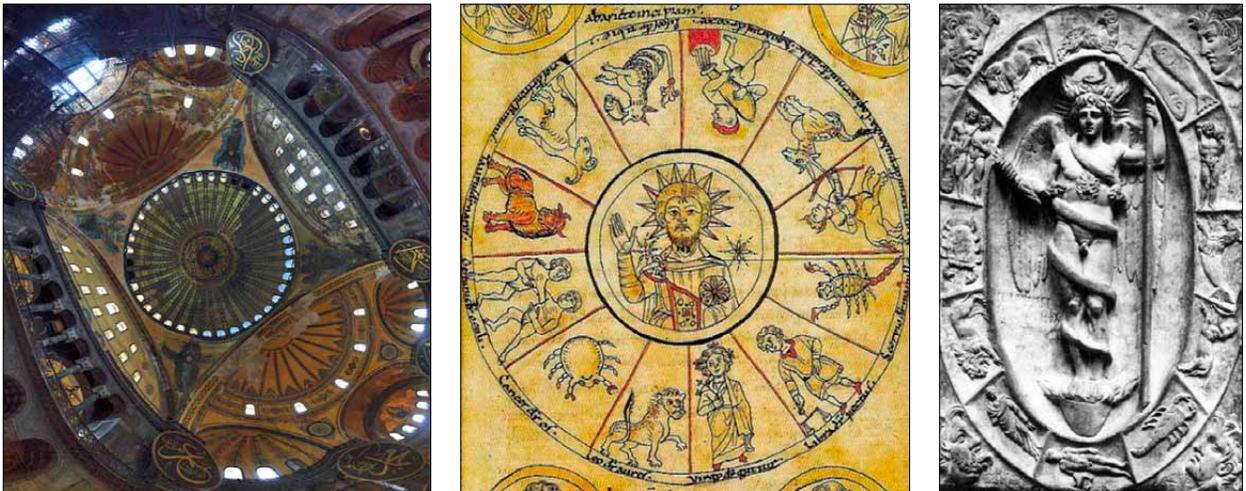

Fig. 2. Symbolism of the dome of Hagia Sophia in comparison to the 8th century drawing of Christ the Sun and the 2nd century orphic medallion of primal god Phanes, which was found in the 15th century Rome. *Sources*: http://gabinetedehistoria.blogspot.com/2011_05_01_archive.html; http://www.nyhetsspeilet.no/2010/04/amanita-muscaria-den-hellige-gral/; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hagia_Sophia.
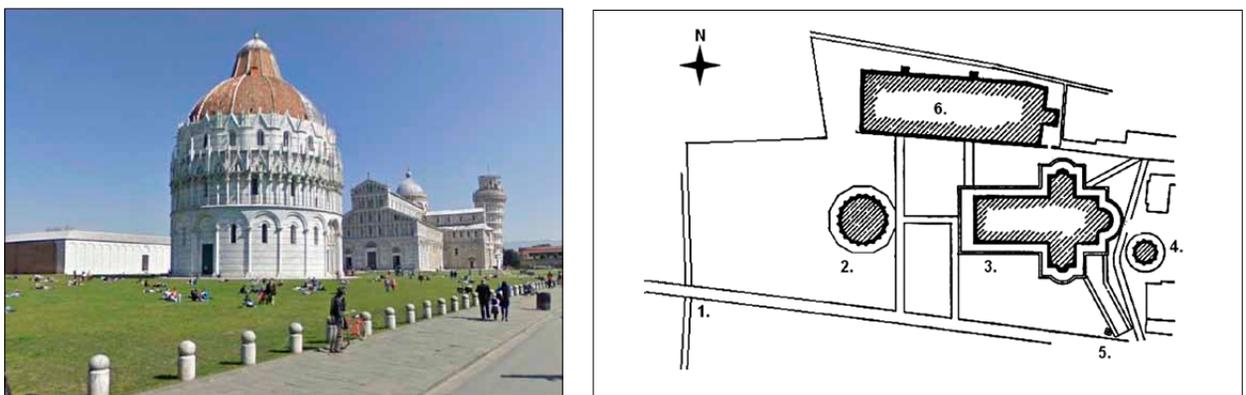

Fig. 3. Piazza dei Miracoli ensemble in Pisa: as seen from the entrance and in plan: 1) the entrance to churchyard; 2) the baptistery; 3) the cathedral; 4) the bell tower; 5) the fountain; 6) the cemetery building. *Sources*: https://maps.google.lt/maps?output=classic&dg=brw; http://archsoc.westphal.drexel.edu/New/ArcSocIISA2.html.

the 15th century St. Lorenz Church in Nuremberg has a rose window decorated with faces of the Sun and the Moon. The ornament surrounding this rose window also has 28 rays and the spires of both towers are again decorated with signs of the Sun and the Moon.

Another interpretation of the Sun and the Moon symbols was the mystical marriage between Christ and his bride Ecclesia (the Church). Various Medieval theologians wrote about this mystical marriage, including St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Anastasius and Thomas Aquinas (Boczkowska 1980: 78). The latter wrote: "The church is as beautiful as the Moon, shining enlightened by its groom in glory and grace. Not so beautiful the Moon is in this life, if sunlight fades in the next life, as reflected is the vision of the Creator" (Thomas Aquinas 1863: 377). Symbolism of the Sun and the Moon bonding was used in the imagery of the Fountain of Life and the Fountain of Youth. This iconographic motif was called coniunctio oppositorum, or the unity of opposites (e.g. see the 14th century miniature kept at Angelica Library in Rome; treatise "Rosarium philosophorum" of the 16th century; "The Garden of Earthly Delights" by Hieronymus Bosch, etc.). The belief that transcendental principle of life comes from unity two opposite origins soon became popular in mystical writings. The treatise "Theatrum Chemicum Britaniccum" of 1652, depicts God, lowering two dragons with the bonded Sun and the Moon for a couple of lovers. The writing under this picture suggests it to be a diagram for the mystical composition of a human being (Fig. 4). Theologians such as Saint Bernard of Clairvaux

(1090–1153) had identified Virgin Mary as the bride of the Song of Songs, the Virgin was worshipped as the Bride of Christ. The duality of masculine and feminine principles in Chartres Cathedral is also represented in arrangement of façades The royal portal in the cathedral's western façade is divided into three parts with individual tympanums. The Sun tower side tympanum depicts the second coming of Christ and the Moon tower side tympanum depicts the Madonna with Child. Both of these scenes are reflected at side facades of the church – the northern rose window and tympanum depict the Madonna and the southern rose window and tympanum again depict the coming of Christ. This can prove that the dual principle of humanity was already an acclaimed Christian symbol at the time.

The symbolism of St. Peter and St. Paul's Church in Vilnius

St. Peter and St. Paul's Church was funded by Grand Hetman of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania Mykolas Kazimieras Pacas (Michał Kazimierz Pac), as a part of Canons Regular of St. Augustine of the Congregation of the Most Holy Saviour at the Lateran Monastery in Vilnius. The building was started in 1668, after the architectural project of Jan Zaor. The primary wooden model of the church was made in Kraków; however, it was corrected by orders of the funder himself once the model was delivered to him in Vilnius. This way, the composition of the church became interestingly heterogeneous: the prototype of St. Peter and St. Paul's Church is the baroque church of Il Gesù in Rome
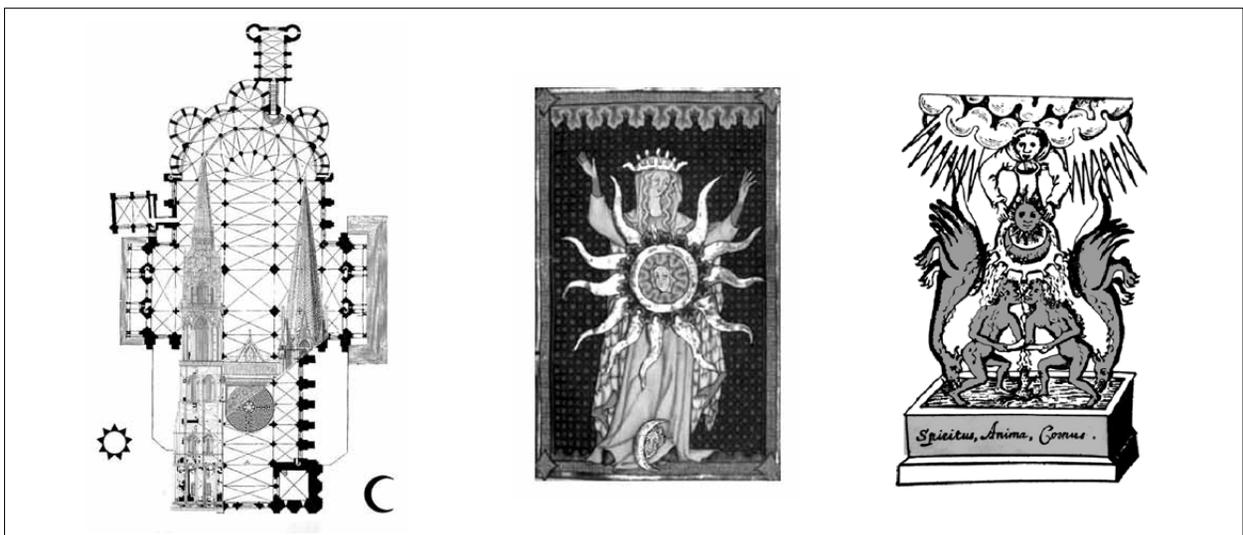

Fig. 4. In scale manipulation of the plan and the main façade of Chartres Cathedral: if aligned, the *oculus* window matches the place of the pavement labyrinth. This feature could be dedicated to heighten the symbology of the Apocalyptical Mary (middle) or to stress the contemporary belief of mystical composition of a human (on the right, treatise "*Theatrum Chemicum Britaniccum*" of 1652). *Sources*: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chartres_Cathedral; http://www.pinterest.com/pin/323414816961501654; Boczkowska (1980).

(1568, architects Giacomo da Vignola and Giacomo della Porta). However, this prototype was heavily adapted to the local context and two towers were added to resemble regional gothic churches (Fig. 5). Later, another Italian architect Giambattista Frediani was hired as the chief architect of both the church and the monastery, and more detailed drawings were made at the site. Since 1677, the interior stucco decorations were mostly made by Italians sculptors Pietro Perti and Giovanni Maria Galli (Samalavičius S., Samalavičius A. 1998: 16, 24, 26; Vaišvilaitė 1995: 65–66). The spatial arrangement and decoration of the church bears numerous religious symbols.

The symbolic unity between microcosm and macrocosm in St. Peter and St. Paul's Church in Vilnius is again represented by the dome and its decoration. The dome also sits on the square base, symbolising the unity between the primordial and material worlds. The pendentives – uniting elements – are also decorated with pictures of Four Evangelists. This image of a tetramorph is even more strengthened by statues of Four Fathers of the Church, placed at the ring of the dome (Fig. 6). Natural light floats from the circular top of the dome, where the face of Christ is depicted gazing down to the earthly plane. The dome is divided by eight spokes. This symbol reminds of early Christianity, when one could not use religious symbols openly; thus, a wheel with six or eight spokes was selected as an anagram for the word "ixoye" (fish). The letters seen in this wheel hid the phrase "Iesous Xristos, Theo Yios, Sotar" (Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour). Back then, a wheel was already a universal symbol of the Sun. This way, the dome of St. Peter and St. Paul's represents the ancient cosmologic idea of Christ the Sun followed by four tetramorph beasts (Fig. 2).

Influenced by Gothic traditions, symbolism of polarised masculinity and femininity in church are represented by altars devoted to Our Lady of Graces (on the left) and Five Wounds of Christ (on the right, Fig. 9). The altar of Our Lady of Graces has two side figures of angels holding the Sun and the Moon. They stand on pillars, each held by four strong men. Those figures are identified as "Science" (the one with the Moon) and "Theology" (the one with the Sun) in accordance with the Medieval symbol of science, which can only bring enlightenment if lightened up by faith itself (Samalavičius S., Samalavičius A. 1998: 124). However, this interpretation is not solid, because symbolism of the Sun and the Moon in Christian iconography has a variety of valid meanings. According to St. Augustine, the Sun and the Moon symbolised the relationship of the two Testaments, as the Old Testament (the Moon) was only to be understood through the light shed upon

it by the New Testament (the Sun). This way, the Sun and the Moon could again represent both the bride from the Song of Solomon ("Who is she that looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and awesome as an army with banners?", Song of Solomon 6:10) and Virgin Mary to whom the comparison was later applied (e.g. tympanum of the Cathedral of Santa Maria of Palma in Mallorca of 1229–1601; and "Litany of Virgin" etching of 1502 from "Book of Hours" by Thielman Kerver kept in Paris). Then, the columns held by quartets of strong men could be interpreted as Jachin and Boaz ("God Strengthens" and "Strength Within") of the original Solomon's Temple. The two pillars are adorned with ribbons that once could have possibly had some explanatory inscriptions on them; but today, a clear iconographic intention of these figures remains unknown. Despite a very specific iconographic scenes depicted in sculptures and paintings of both altars (suggestively made by other artists than Perti and Galli), the stucco relief scenes surrounding these altars are dedicated to more varied scenes from the life of Virgin Mary and the Passion of Christ. These scenes devoted to Virgin Mary and Christ are placed at different sides of the transept. One must remember that still in 1917, Canon Law for the separation of men and women in church was strongly advocated (Canon 1262, § 1. "It is desirable that, in harmony with ancient Church order, the women in church be separated from the men"); consequently, women usually sat on the left side, and men sat on the right side of the nave. Originally, this polarization in St. Peter and St. Paul's Church would have been even more obvious, as two additional altars devoted to Mary and Christ once stood at each side of the main nave.

Additional symbolism of the church includes statues of twelve apostles placed at the central nave and the transept; and the statues of four main personas of Christ's story: St. John the Baptist, St. Joseph, the Apocalyptical Mary with the Beast under her feet and Christ himself, resurrected at the altar apse. However, the most interesting part of church's decoration is figures of eight beatitudes, taken from Christ's Sermon on the Mount. The teaching, as written in the New Testament, describes eight types of believers who would eventually be granted access to heaven: the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers and those who are persecuted because of righteousness. Not only the mystical meaning of beatitudes, but also the sequence, in which they appear was important for Christian theology, e.g. St. John Chrysostom commented that the order of those blessings is like the golden chain, leading towards

salvation. Like Stations of the Cross, eight beatitudes placed in this order should create a continuous narrative of the way to salvation.

The appearance of beatitudes in St. Peter and St. Paul's Church seems to be directly taken from "Iconologia" book by Cesare Ripa (Fig. 7). The book was first published in Rome in 1593, without illustrations; then; it was republished in Rome in 1603; then, in 1611 and in 1618 in Padua; in 1613 in Siena; and in 1620, in Parma; etc. The book was spreading in Europe with translations into English, German, French and Dutch. Despite the tradition, the statues representing each of eight beatitudes appear to be randomly dispersed; however, a closer look reveals that they were attached to each of four chapels of the church, according to their individual character. The peacemakers and the pure in heart are represented above the chapel of Holy Queens; the poor in spirit and those who mourn are represented above the chapel of St. Augustine; those who hunger and thirst for righteousness and the meek are represen-

ted above the chapel of St. Ursula and Virgin Martyrs; and the merciful and those who are persecuted because of righteousness are represented above the chapel of Holy Warriors (Figs 7, 8). Their division into four represents very distinctive social classes of the Christian community – rulers, saints, martyrs and knights. This could be a very clever insight into the social order of the late 17th century Lithuania. Under the rule of royals, one could either choose to be a soldier of the rightful master, or become a monk of the Church. St. Ursula was not particularly popular as a saint in Lithuania; however, she was tortured on her way to marriage and considered the patron of marital life, which stands for the third opportunity of the way of life.

However, there could also be another way to explain the symbolism of four chapels of St. Peter and St. Paul's Church. In general, the beatitudes depicted above the chapel of Holy Queens describe heartiness, and the beatitudes of the chapel of St. Augustine suggest sadness. The beatitudes of chapel of St. Ursula and Virgin
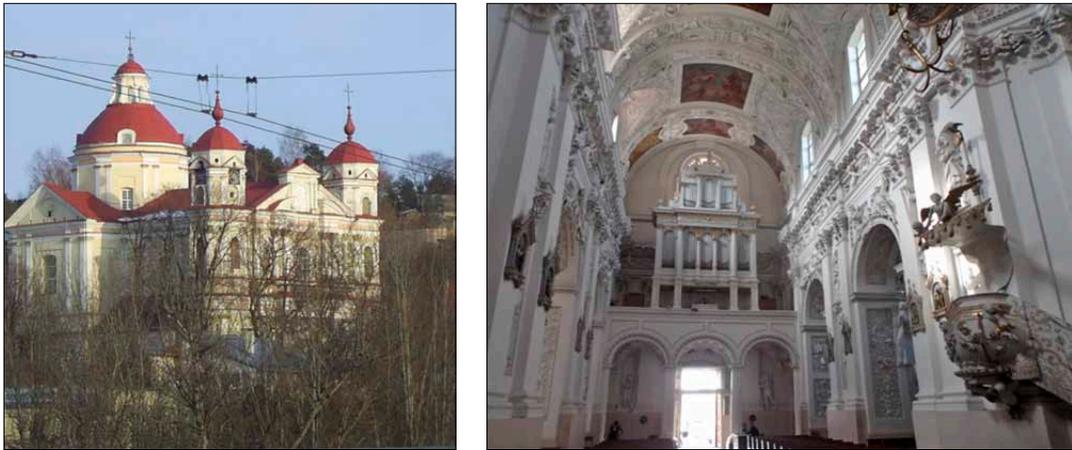

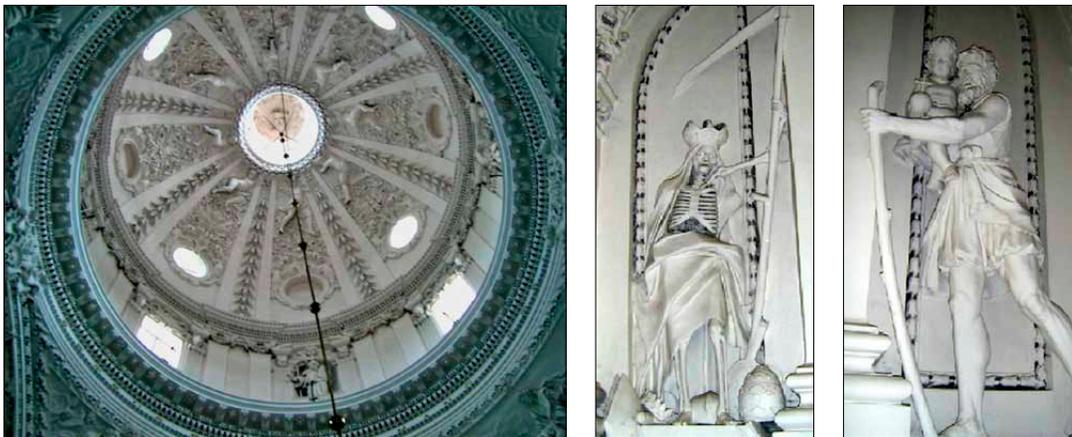Fig. 5. The exterior and interior of St. Peter and St. Paul's Church in Vilnius (1671–1702)

Fig. 6. Interior decoration of St. Peter and St. Paul's Church: the dome, the statue of Death and the statue of St. Christopher

Martyrs are devoted to surrender and peacefulness, and the beatitudes of chapel of Holy Warriors would oppose aggression and mercy by contrasting sculptural group of putti being either killed or saved at different sides of the arch (Fig. 7). Those four characteristics are very similar to the theory of humorism, which was developed by the Greek physician Hippocrates (460–370 BC) and was widely adapted to Christianity as late as the 15th century. Accordingly, the chapel of Holy Queens could represent sanguine temperament, chapel of St. Augustine would represent melancholy, the chapel of St. Ursula would represent phlegmatic character and chapel of Holy Warriors would represent choleric temper. Some minor iconographic motifs could support this theory, e.g. from the very beginning, the relic war drums were kept inside the chapel of Holy Queens and the sanguine temperament was traditionally associated with music. The melancholic temperament was associated with research and introversion, so coincidently the beatitudes representing sadness are placed above the chapel of theologian and philosopher St. Augustine (Fig. 8). In 1581, etching by Maarten de Vos Melancholia represents a nun and Cholera is represented as an armed woman. In iconographic tradition, monasticism was directly associated with melancholy, and warfare was directly associated with choleric temper.

All chapels of St. Peter and St. Paul's Church are united by continuous hallway, just as in the prototype Church of Il Gesù in Rome. This arrangement led doc. P. Sledziewski to write an article about the continuous theological narrative expressed through interior decoration of the church in 1932 (Samalavičius S., Samalavičius A. 1998: 160). This narrative is said to be created as a road for penitent people. The road would start in baptistery, where the statue of St. Christopher and Baby Jesus (also represented in the coat of arms of Vilnius) is seen. This subliminal Calvary road would lead penitent people all the way through chapels to the end point, where the figure of death is seen. The statue of Death symbolises the *memento mori* idea, which was very popular during the baroque period (Fig. 6).

However, if we believe that four chapels of St. Peter and St. Paul's Church were devoted to four tempers, another continuous narrative of the whole church could be seen. In Christian theology and some contemporary mystical treatises, four temperaments were treated as part of tetramorphic cosmic order: they were treated as analogies to four sides of the world, four continents (Australia was not yet discovered), four parts of a day and four seasons. In the last case, the sanguine temperament was associated with spring; the melancholy was associated with winter, the phlegmatic temperament

was associated with autumn and choleric temperament – with summer (e.g. the 12th century manuscript "Cosmological Miscellany", including excerpts from Isidore's "De natura rerum" and "Etymologiae", and Cicero's "Aratea", produced in Peterborough (England), kept in the British Library; diagram from "The Optic Glass of the Four Humors" of 1639, Fig. 8).

If moving clockwise – starting from the baptistery and ending with the statue of Death – the sequence of four temperaments has no sense. However, moving counter clockwise, four chapels come together in a perfect sequel of a year: starting from summer (choleric, chapel of Holy Warriors) through autumn (phlegmatic, chapel of St. Ursula and Virgin Martyrs) and winter (melancholic, chapel of St. Augustine) to spring (sanguine, chapel of Holy Queens). The narrative finishes at the section of spring, leading straight to the baptistery. One should remember the old theological custom to be baptised during Easter – the celebration of the Resurrection. Respectively, baptism was treated as death of mortal life and resurrection in Christ. This way, the continuous narrative of St. Peter and St. Paul's Church would not lead toward the grotesque *memento mori* figure, but to symbols of salvation and rebirth. Actually, the statue of Death in St Peter and St. Paul's Church tramples all signs of social status (crown, papal tiara, bishop's mitre, hetman's mace, book and violin, as in traditional Triumph of Death images) as they have no power on the road to salvation. Only pure hearted and innocent are granted heaven, as suggested by the figure of infant Christ and the putti, placed in every possible part of the church. The theory of humorism was widely publicised in baroque period Italy, e.g. the same "Iconologia" book by C. Ripa (Figs 7, 8); thus, it must have somehow influenced the artistic point of view of decorators of the church.

The iconography of putti entablature at St. Peter and St. Paul's Church was also widely and variously interpreted. Some of the putti have violins; others are riding dolphins or kissing each other, connected by the flower garland with visible heads of a goat, a sheep, a snake, an ox and a horse. Art researcher and priest Kazimieras Jasėnas (1897–1954) called these motifs pagan, unsuitable for a church (Jasėnas 1934: 255–262) and aesthetic theorist Jonas Grinius (1902–1980) explained the whole subject as a psalm orchestra (Grinius 1940: 67–68). However, the same "Iconologia" book by Cesare Ripa has the image of an infant riding a dolphin called "Pleasant mood, treatable, and loving". The description says that a dolphin loves a man and carries him out of share instinct, rather than interest or sinister reasons (Fig. 10). The iconography of putti playing music could also be explained by an illustration from "A Collection

Fig. 7. Illustrations of eight beatitudes from "Iconologia" book by C. Ripa (first published in 1610–1611, Padua) served as the source of inspiration for figures of beatitudes in St. Peter and St. Paul's Church in Vilnius. *Source*: http://www.labirintoermetico.com/04Iconologia/iconologia_ripa_immagini/index.html.
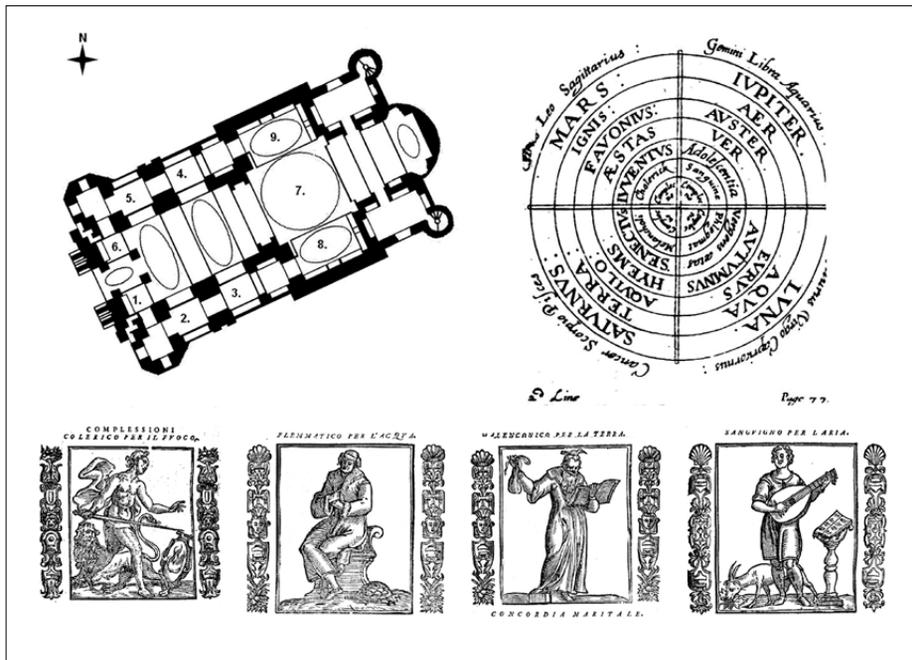

Fig. 8. The elevation of St. Peter and St. Paul's Church: 1) the statue of Death; 2) the chapel of Holy Warriors; 3) the chapel of St. Ursula and Virgin Martyrs; 4) the chapel of St. Augustine; 5) the chapel of Holy Queens; 6) the baptistery; 7) the dome; 8) the altar of Five Wounds of Christ; 9) the altar of Gracious Mary.

Notes: The cyclic nature of the church plan could be used to illustrate the chart of four temperaments; for comparison see T. Walkington's Diagram from "The Optic Glass of the Four Humors", 1639 and illustrations from "Iconologia" book by C. Ripa. *Sources:* http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ko%C5%9Bci%C3%B3%C5%82_%C5%9Bw._Piotra_i_Paw%C5%82a_na_Antokolu_w_Wilnie; http://www.examiner.com/article/shakespeare-101-what-are-the-humours; http://forum.tarothistory.com/viewtopic.php?f=12&t=530&start=40.
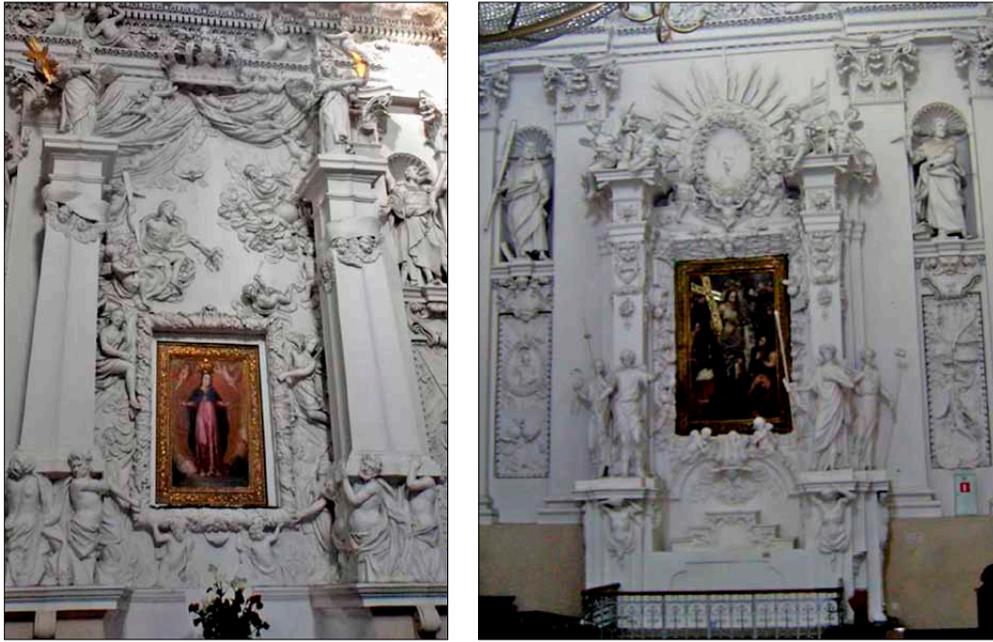
Fig. 9. The two side altars of St. Peter and St. Paul's Church devoted to Our Lady of Graces and Five Wounds of Christ

Fig. 10. The iconography of putti of St. Peter and Paul's Church compared to illustration from "Iconologia" book by C. Ripa, illustration from "A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne" by George Wither and "Farewell of Saints Peter and Paul" by Alonzo Rodriguez. *Sources*: Samalavičius S., Samalavičius A. (1998); http://www.labirintoermetico.com/04Iconologia/iconologia_ripa_immagini/index.html; http://findingshakespeare.co.uk/the-food-of-love; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiss_of_peace.

of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne" by George Wither (originally published in London, 1635). It depicts Cupid holding a lute, claiming that music teaches love ("musicam amor docet"). The embracing putti share a kiss, which is the kiss of peace from the New Testament: "Greet one another with a kiss of love" (I Peter 5:14). St. Augustine's Sermon 227 provides clear evidence that the "kiss of peace" practiced in early Christian liturgy was exchanged mouth to mouth for several centuries. Even so, the image of St. Peter and St. Paul sharing a kiss of piece is a widely known iconographic motif of both orthodox icons and catholic paintings (e.g. 16th century painting "Farewell of Saints Peter and Paul" by Alonzo Rodriguez kept in Museo Regionale di Messina). Therefore, three types of putti depicted on entablature could represent joy, love and peace, which

themselves are fruits of the Holy Spirit, described in the New Testament: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22–23).

The main theological idea of St. Peter and St. Paul's Church was not granted by its original architect Jan Zaor. St. Peter and St. Paul's Church shares its features with an earlier output of this architect – the Church of the Holy Trinity in Tarnów, Poland (1645–1655). However, the interior of the Church of the Holy Trinity lacks coherence and solid idea. The connection between symbolism and architectural composition of St. Peter and St. Paul's Church must have been established solely by talents of Milanese artist Pietro Perti and Giovani Maria Galli from Rome, as they stressed those common architectural symbols with their decorative work.

Conclusions

Over the years, Christian mysticism created multi-dimensional perception of the world. Mysticism of Christianity started in the 2nd century, when theologians started to believe that Bible texts have additional hidden meanings. Unlike texts of the Torah, which in many cases lay out mandatory orders, Gospels of the New Testament essentially consist from allegories and parables. For this reason, medieval Christian scholasticism perceived texts of the Holy Bible firstly as descriptions of the events; then, the same fact was treated as an analogue of some past events or premonition of the future; the third interpretation revealed moral, instructive examples; and the fourth – sacramental religious truth (Gurevičius 1989: 69, 79). Artists were often asked not only to match forethought place and purpose by their art piece, but also read into texts of the Holy Bible.

This is the reason why multilayered analysis is widely used for any non-architectural Christian art artefact. Objects of Christian art are tested by different levels of interpretation, e.g. picture of a winged lion could be interpreted as an emblem of Mark the Evangelist, as a moral allegory of strength, and, from mystical point of view – as a symbol of the crucified Christ, all at the same time (Ramonienė 1997: 6). The analysis of Christian sacral architecture must also operate two different ontological dimensions of an art object – its form and its symbolic content and meaning.

Christian sacral architecture is unique, as Christianity started treating the House of God not just as a mere community centre or space for rituals, but rather as otherworldly, transcendental idea or God's promise of salvation. If we believe that in common case

architecture is able to have a meta-codal function, i.e. artistic content beyond its function and form, sacral architecture is a fine field of research. Because of allegorical nature of Christian theology, there is no possibility for most prominent examples of Christian sacral architecture to be merely functional and bear no symbolic meaning in its form, because the space of a Christian church had to be sacralised to establish a connection with the transcendental House of God.

A very important aspect of architectural artistry is that we are able to interpret architectural objects as a reflection of various cultural phenomena. However, usual means of architectural analysis – form analysis, social, spatial and stylistic analysis – are limited in explaining and interpreting some architectural objects. Semantic and semiotic studies of meta-codal function of architecture are often restricted to the analysis of allusions or quotations of historic styles, without deeper content analysis. Such semantic access to architectural theory reveals the inherent drawback – the lack of attention to the fact that architecture, like any other art, manifests itself through the communication process. In order to broaden the field of architectural content studies, this paper discussed the one prominent example of sacral architectural symbolism in St. Peter and St. Paul's Church in Vilnius, which is conveyed not only by the help of decorations or applied arts, but some purely architectural means, i.e. the structure of space and spatial arrangement of particular elements.

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GYTIS ORŽIKAUSKAS

Faculty of Architecture, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Pylimo st. 26/1, Vilnius, Lithuania
E-mails: gytisorzikauskas@yahoo.co.uk; gytis.orzikauskas@heritage.lt

Bachelor of architecture at the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture of Kaunas University of Technology, Master of History and Theory of Architecture and doctoral student at the Faculty of Architecture of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University. Currently working at the Department of Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture. Research interests: postmodern architecture, historical architecture, architectural symbolism, esotericism, architectural artistry.