Tradition through Innovation – “Return to the Future”

Jerzy Uscinowicz 1

1Bialystok University of Technology, 15-351 Bialystok, ul. Wiejska 45 A, Poland
j.uscinowicz@pb.edu.pl

Abstract. Two thousandth years of history of Christianity proved that a main criterion of a value of church architecture was not based on architectural precursors. This architecture was sacred because it was a carrier of a „truth of God” and – like a liturgical mysteries and iconography art – it was a theological comment. It was a codified language of the transposes of religions essences and orders, into the form of architectural expression. This was in an East Christianity and this happens there up to this day. Art is a constant movement between religion and aesthetics. At that moment it ceases to be a work of art, because it is elevated to the level of theological sphere. Its whole value is participation in the life of the ‘Other’. If it is a living symbol, it becomes a sacrament. This paper presents selected examples of interaction between architecture, iconography and theology in contemporary sacred art of the last decade in Poland. It also shows the process of evolution of traditional spatial and functional structures and application of new iconography conventions in the Christian temples. It covers problems in art as well as new essential ideological aspects of symbolical and liturgical nature. The effects of design and creation work presented in this paper, serve as a basis to classify these objects as traditional. This assessment of the synthesis of art achieved here – being always the basis for creating the liturgical mystery play within the Christian Church – is left to the reader himself.

1. Introduction

The Bible begins with the act of creation of the world – ‘the sky and the earth’ [1]. It ends with a description of ‘a new earth and a new sky’. Those two states of the history of the world are symbolically connected with the Paradise, its original state and with ‘New Jerusalem’, the final vision of change on the last day of its existence. The Paradise is a place to which God brought a human being, who was supposed to be the master of creation, the priest of paradisal church. However, man failed to execute the plan. After expulsion from the Paradise “Cain built a city (…)’ (1st Book of Moses 4, 17). The process has not been completed and will last till the time when a perfect city is built, which is described by John the Theologian as ‘the holy city – New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride’ (Rev. 21, 2), adding ‘I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple’ (Rev. 21, 21-22).

It is a short version of building a city. It is also a short history of building a temple.

Prophetically foretold city in its symbolic vision has been a temple. It is a place of life of a religious man between the beginning of history and its end. It is New Jerusalem homo religiosus in which God will be ‘everything in everybody and in everything’. Religious fulfillment takes place here. And although the necessity to build temples will pass, today they are indispensable as places of meetings and as an image of Heavenly New Jerusalem.

The whole art is aimed at creating this ideal image, a different, future and already changed world in a temple. It is mainly a temple, through the art of liturgy, architecture, icon, sculpture, music, singing,
word, gesture, movement, liturgical robes and accessories, light, fire and incense smoke that shows us the world which is to come on the last day.

Presenting the world in its theosis, in transformation into saved reality was and is the basic function of all types of art. This is how it used to be. Is this the case today? Is it a transmission of “living” Church Tradition and its esthetic and religious experience of sacrum? Does it tell us anything about this world today? Are divinity and holiness still present in it? How does it happen?

Asking a question about the meaning of human existence, we also ask about the meaning of man’s creativity through art, creativity understood as a continuation of divine work of creation.

Is this art today a theurgical art, the art in which the border between sacrum and profanum is neutralized, exposing a pre-figured image of a city – Heavenly Jerusalem? It is possible to present this image in the walls of a temple today?

2. The Symbol and the Temple

In the past we were certain of it. Today it is worth reminding that expression through symbols is for mankind a constant feature. The language of symbolism is possibly the only way to reach reality which is so elusive in immediate experience. This is especially true for creative arts. It is the only way, because there does not exist any other for – as Nikolai Berdyaev says – since God and man ‘are not outside each other and they are not one’ [2]. Being unable to express that truth through concepts, we must stick to as little as expressing it through symbols.

As Mircea Eliade rightly observes: ‘the only truth behind them (symbols) is their existence’ [3]. It is enough that they exist, that they are real in this world, and their fundamental role is to function as the language of religion. Through them religion can speak. And it does so in a direct way. Symbols are, after all, for religion the most direct method of communication. Through the indirect use of what is material, religious symbols reach beyond what they represent and enter the world which is impossible to access in any other way. ‘Participating in the heavenly world, in its material configuration’ [4] symbols have the power to point to that world, to transfer and reveal it in the reality which is given to man.

All that was directly implemented in the architecture and art of a temple which, while containing many other symbols, and structures of symbols organized in orders, is at the same time a symbol in itself. The temple is a symbol, for similarly to a symbol it ‘manifests the presence of God’. It is in fact, as Saint John of Damascus puts it – ‘one enormous icon’ [5] to that presence. It is a model of God-created reality, it shows the maximization of man’s re-creative activity, which he pursues ‘in the image and likeness’ of God’s creation. The temple is the ‘the house of God’ and ‘the gate of heaven’ (Gen. 28:17). It is the Paradise and the Kingdom of God – ‘the Kingdom of God on earth’, Heavenly Jerusalem. It is an image of the Holy Trinity and Christ as its hypostasis, an image of The Church in its strive to bring salvation to mankind and the world. It is, finally, a symbol of the divinization (theosis) of man and the universe as parts of God’s creation.

Everything inside the temple is a symbol. All its forms and spaces, its various elements and orders, its borders and connectors, numbers and geometry, colours and phenomena. Its vaults, domes, arcades and arches, walls and pillars, stairs and ladders, entrance, doors and windows, curtains and portals, friezes and cornices, lines, surfaces and form, holy images, icons, ornaments and colours, light, fire and smoke. Everything.

And yet, we might ask, wouldn’t it be possible to have a temple without the symbols? The history of the Church and the history of its art proves that symbol was indispensable. It appeared, developed and expanded all the time. Sometimes, for different reasons, it became very simple or even forgotten, continuing its life in concealment to re-emerge again later. When it was changing – either because of accumulating or simplifying meaning – it was doing so for specific reasons. Because its task was to finally achieve what it signified. The basis for its existence was full participation in what it represented. For its meaning was not only to show or replace the reality it symbolised. It was fulfilled when that reality transformed and divinized everything that it included. Therefore, Mircea Eliade was right when he wrote that: ‘Symbolism is a prolongation of hierophany
thanks to symbols the process of hierophanization continues’ [3]. This is where the fundamental function of symbols resulted from. They were not only equivalents, replacements or representations of the signified reality. They were its activity prolonged in time, continuing and continuously renewed and sanctified sacrum reality.

As the Fathers of the Church said, the temple is a symbol-icon of ‘Heavenly Jerusalem’. It is the place of sacral fulfilment – transformation and divinization. One day the need to build it will cease. Today, however, it is needed, even necessary. The temple is then a gateway, a passage through communal and personal transformation of the man and the world to their divinization and salvation in God. It is the continually renewed and aspiring to holiness matter of this world. All art has forever worked to create that future, ideal, divinized image of the world in the temple. It has been doing so in imaging the world to come in final days. It reaches fulfilment when man, through his ability to create art, succeeds in taking it beyond its material limitations. Then, together with liturgy, through the synthesis of all arts it helps him find his way to Heavenly Jerusalem.

The temple – being a true symbol – is, however, not only an ideal, perfect and spiritual creation. It is still anchored in the material world. Yet this materiality is aspiring, with deeply ingrown potential to pass to a state which is higher, transformed, divinized. The fundamental function of the temple is transformation of matter, leading it out of the sin of the fall, its metanoia, its metamorphosis. Through liturgy and the beauty of art which supports it, it is supposed to lead it to salvation. Although it is constructed of worldly matter, it contains a strong spiritual factor. Together they constitute the two states, not separable and not merged, strongly connected with each other and impossible to be fully separated. Without matter, the spirit is elusive, without the spirit, the matter remains lifeless. The relation between the material and the spiritual world is, however, different. They also have different manifestations in the synthesis of arts, depending on the time and place. Art itself is not static in this process as well. It changes continually together with man and the world, it evolves together with his industrial cognition. For didn’t the perception of the world change after the Copernican Revolution or when Einstein announced his theory of relativity?

3. Dynamism of Tradition

The presence of all its various architectural elements and orders in the temple is not individual. They always carry particular meaning – theological and cosmological. Their existence is also not the result of ‘force of habit’. Their evolution in history was not static, as mere presence, but rather dynamic, through continuous supplementation of their meaning. The same is true for all the other spaces, forms, planes and lines used in the temple’s architecture. The same for colours, phenomena, geometry and figures. The same is true for orders, which create the whole symbolic structure of the temple and make it a structural, harmonious ‘whole’.

One can discover this by considering two perhaps most obvious, and never questioned, permanent conventions of the symbolic structure of an Orthodox temple, its art – transparency and reflection. The presence of its conventions in the temple is inseparably connected with light, the manner in which it is introduced into the temple and the way it is utilised. After all, the structure of the temple is built mainly by light. It creates its space in the real time – and because of this, it is a good example for revealing the specific theosophy of expression through art. It is worth to mention a few modern examples which, by reaching beyond fixed and known to us conventions, show new possibilities of expression and their sanctifying effects. They constitute an innovation, resulting from the art of synthesis of means of expression which are not always related, but also of those, which have so far functioned in different, sometimes even opposing, artistic conventions.

It is neither time nor place for outlining the ‘metaphysics of light’ in detail. We have been well aware of it since the times of Dionysius the Areopagite [6]. Let’s just note that light in theosophical perception can be interpreted mostly in two different ways, which follow the dual image of the world itself – as brightness/illumination and reflection and as transparency (translucency).
On the one hand, light is brightness, which makes it possible to see and experience the world, delimiting forms and giving transparency to beings. All the windows, which introduce white or multicoloured light into the temple – give it brightness, enable seeing, orientation, perception of transparency of being or... etc. (see figure 1,2).

![Figure 1](moscow-cathedral.jpg)  
**Figure 1.** Moscow. The catholicon. Andronikov Monastery of the Saviour. Photo: J.Uścinowicz (2005)  

![Figure 2](constantinople-hagia-sophia.jpg)  
**Figure 2.** Constantinople. Church of the Hagia Sophia. Eastern vault. Photo: J.Uścinowicz (2005)

On the other hand, light is shining, which – in the words of Sergei Averintsev – ‘delights the soul, brings mind to exaltation and dazzles vision’ [7]. All the special forms, icons, mosaics, etc. by reflecting light illuminate the ‘Glory of God’. Light shed by gold, for example, is shining. It has gravity. For glory is an ideal emblem of biblical glory which blinds the eyes. Light transferring through glass is lucidity. It is characterised by lightness and clarity.

Here we are taken back to the New Testament vision of Heavenly Jerusalem, the vision where both interpretations of the ‘metaphysics of light’ appear jointly. Transparent brightness and heavy glow are combined in John the Evangelist’s revelation, when he writes: ‘the city was pure gold, like clear glass’ (Rev. 21:18). Their equivalents are gold and glass.

Sanctified, and thus light-reflecting or light-giving matter is a symbol of divinized matter, filled with divine energies, aspiring to another, divine world, matter which, however, in its interpretation by the two Christian traditions – Eastern and Western – is given different roles. Where the East creates mosaics, frescoes and icons, the West makes stained glass. The former reflect, refract light. The latter transmit light. The brilliance of gold is opaque. On the other hand, transparency is the dominant feature of stained glass. The East and the West put pressure on two different sides of the dual emblem of the vision of the New Jerusalem from Revelation.

But let’s go on. What are the implications for art? What deeper meaning does it have? Especially for a religious person of modern day?

4. Transparency and Reflection. Metaphysics of light

Let’s refer to the so called theology of expression, for only theological methods of interpreting those different means of sacral expression can give us a possibility to meet criteria prerequisite to deem them adequate in the sphere of *sacrum*. It is because they lead directly to the explanation of their sense and meaning. By pointing to their theological meaning, they at the same time describe their ontological value. They realise the aim of art itself, which is to present and participate in the divinized reality.

Light is, first and foremost, an image of the heavenly Divine Light, a privileged symbol of Divinity. It is absolute, immaterial, homogeneous, perpetual and indivisible. Because of this, it is the most adequate symbolic image of God, His ‘absolute metaphor’, the best way to show the glory of God as luminous intensity. This is the reason why the Sun as the source of light on earth is a symbol of God. There are numerous mentions of this in the Old and the New Testament, as well as in the
teachings of the Saint Fathers of the Church. Prophet Malachi, speaking of the coming of the kingdom of the Messiah, announces ‘the sun of righteousness shall rise’ (Mal. 4:2), and John the Evangelist in his Apocalypse describes New Jerusalem which: ‘(...) has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb’ (Rev. 21:23). We find it also in the Book of Psalms: ‘For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor (...)’ (Psalm 84:12).

But ‘The Sun of Righteousness’ is also one of the prefigured names of Christ, ‘the true light of the world’. Christ himself says: ‘I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness’ (John 12:46), is ‘the true light, which gives light to everyone, (...)’ (John 1:9), ‘the sunrise (...) from on high’ (Luke 1:78), ‘Light of light’ (Nicene Creed). It is also He who is: ‘(...)the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature’ (Heb. 1:3). Saint Symeon of Thessalonica, describing the rite of consecration of the temple, calls Christ ‘the only true Light’ and ‘Sunrise from on high’.

Light is also a symbol of the Holy Spirit [8]. It is thus a symbol of each Divine Hypostasis separately and their unity in the Holy Trinity at the same time – the ‘absolute metaphor’ of their Divinity in the full. It also relates to the light of the saints, to whom Christ says: ‘You are the light of the world.’ (Matt. 5:14). They are a ‘clear reflection’, messengers and spiritual servants to God’s values. Light is finally a symbol of life: ‘In him was life, and the life was the light of men’ (John 1:4).

There are more direct references to light. They are an inseparable part of every liturgy, the content of many hymns, prayers, rituals. Their theological meaning is radiation with the ‘Glory of God’. But it is not everything yet. Emanation of light is connected with angelic forces, as ‘secondary lights’ mediating in the transmission of the light of God’s Mercy: ‘After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory’ (Rev. 18:1).

According to the saint Fathers of the Church, the fantastic light of God’s Mercy is given to us through angelic forces, the condensed ‘secondary light’ of God [9]. It is the opinion of, among others,
Saint Dionysus the Areopagite – he speaks about it while pondering the type of heavenly service of Archangels. Christian liturgy and art, so particularly engulfed in awaiting Parousia, time after time mentions angelic beings as those who accompany Christ in holy mysteries, due to him being the highest priest and Pantocrator: ‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne’ (Matt. 25:31).

This is how it used to be. How does it look like today?

The light of the openness of the emblem of the Apocalypse for double interpretation and the resulting diversity, but also the possibility of the synthesis of arts associated with light, including interconfessional art, it is worth to mention as an example that modern phenomenon of expression through the alliance of art of architecture, sculpture and icon. Those examples may be few, but they show ever appearing new possibilities for the synthesis of art and, what is more, synthesis which does not remain on the level of empty syncretism without meaning. Their theological meaning is very deep.

Alliance, or sometimes even merger, of the conventions of light transparency and light reflection, can be observed in the category of modern icon and stained glass, in the form of the so called stained-glass icon. In the convention of light reflection such connection of angelological geometric figures, albeit perceived in the opposite direction, is not entirely new. Geometric mega-structures of various types of vaulting – net, stellar, cross or diamond – which create hierarchies of basic shapes as geometric abstracts of angelic forces we can find in the Roman-Catholic Lublin Castle Chapel of the Holy Trinity or in the catholicon of the Orthodox Monastery of the Annunciation in Supraśl. Sharp geometric divisions of the vaulting, marked by rib lines, form areas which seem ideal for angelological imagery.

In the church in Lublin, the vaulting of the nave and the presbytery carries a representation of the heavenly glory of God (Figure 3). Most of the 27 areas of the vaulting contain images of heavenly subtle beings, in compliance with Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite’s treaty Celestial Hierarchy. They include nine choirs of angels divided into three hierarchies of three orders each: Seraphim, Cherubim, and Thrones; Dominations, Virtues, and Powers; and the lowest of the three, Principalities, Archangels, and Angels. 15 of them are of the anthropomorphic type, 14 – zoomorphic, and two (thrones) in the form of winged wheels. Christ is surrounded on four sides by Archangels: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel. A representation of Deesis in the presbytery and Hetoimasia on the vaulting of the southern side of the nave complete the depiction of the heavenly glory of God.

In the orthodox monastery church of the Annunciation in Supraśl Lavra the image is even more powerful. The crowning dome is a characteristic octagonal star with a magnificent Pantocrator icon in the centre and in the arms – six-winged seraphim (Figure 4). Eastern vaulting of the naos is stellar and eight-pointed as well, with 24 areas filled with frescoes, separated by ribs. In the centre, inside eight rhombuses there are representations of angels of the highest triad in the hierarchy: six-winged seraphim and four-winged cherubim (Figure 5). Inside four quadrangles-rays – tetramorphs. The quadrangles between them contain four images, starting from the West: Lord God of Sabaoth, Christ as an Angel of the Great Council, Christ Emmanuel and a symbol of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove with a nimbus and an aureole made up of two quadrangles. On the outmost sections of the vaulting, in eight triangular fields: seraphim, prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel; in the other four: medallions with torsos of the saints – Hermolaus, Pantaleon, Cosmas and Damian.

Let’s remember that octahedron, derived from the numerical configuration of 8, is a symbol of perfection, immortality, resurrection, the ‘eighth day’ – as the day of salvation, infinity, ‘eighth celestial sphere’, etc. Octahedron geometry as well as that of an eight-pointed star is frequently associated with the ‘Star of Bethlehem’ and the Church, which like the ‘guiding star’ shows the way to salvation – life in the eternity of the ‘eighth century’ in the ‘eighth heaven’ [8].

5. Innovation

Contemporarily we see specific examples of this in both imaging conventions. Jerzy Nowosielski and Adam Stalony-Dobrzański expressed it in the conventions of stained-glass transparency (Figures 6, 7) and reflection of the icon or polychrome (Figures 14, 15, 16).
It is mainly this angelological identification, though perhaps this is only my intuition, which had a direct impact on the stained glass created by Stalony-Dobrzanski and Nowosielski – on their network of graphic plane divisions, and their holistic iconic picture – a symbolic translation of the "angelic powers". The luminous and bodiless hierarchies of angels, archangels, and cherubim presented here under the appearances of geometric shapes arranged in polyphonic troops of various configurations, accompany, well, indeed even build, the figures of Christ, Our Lady and the saints shown in the stained glass windows. They all are here as if clad in them, they shine the light of God together: "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew, 5:16).

Stalony-Dobrzanski's and Nowosielski's stained glass remain anchored in the tradition of iconic, they are different (Figures 6, 7). Their semiotic reception principle is built of harmoniously consonant geometric figures of angeologological abstractions. Figures - angels. These figures are cited here according to their Orthodox understanding and meaning. Because angels are perfect messengers and intermediaries between the Absolute and the created world. They transmit the light of transcendence. As said the Holy Fathers of the Church, we receive the uncreated light of Divine Grace just through their intermediation - the concentrated "second light" of God. "Subtle beings" or angels, are perceived in orthodox theology as the 'second light', 'secondary lights' and 'the focus of the pure Light of God'. They are saint beings, as they live in the Light of God, they are His messengers and reflection. This is discussed by St. Dionysius the Areopagite [6]. These angelic powers, as secondary or second lights, carry the light of Divine Grace that enlightens and safeguards the temple against invasion of "spirits of darkness, fallen angels" [8]. They have no bodies, so there they have been cited as the geometric characters-abstacts. Triangles, rhomboids, trapezoids, squares, and their excellent, consonant polyphonic arrangements (Greek πολυφωνία polyphonia - "many voices") – these are the troops of angels, angelic choirs (the so called 'heavenly host' as the angeologological personification of heavenly powers of Angels in their nine choirs: Seraphs, Cherubs, Thrones, Rulers, Superiority, Power, Force, Archangels and Angels), and hierarchies.

Transparency and reflection is also related to textural and organic transparency of matter in an icon. Modelling with light and colour is nothing new. Examples include icons of Old Believers from Wietka near Gomel, or icons from Kostroma (Figure 14) and Yaroslavl. Although the icon always eludes shadow, treating it as a manifestation of dark, infernal forces, whereas for the sculpture, because of its spatial nature of expression, shadow is inherent, what happened here is a bizarre synthesis of
opposites. Stereography of such representations remains a phenomenon even today, especially if one considers the time they were made.

Figure 8. Moscow. Bogoroditse-Smolensky Novodevichy Monastery. The Holy Cross. Ph. J.U. (2014)

Figure 9. Bielsk Podlaski. Orthodox Church of Protection of the Holy Virgin. Ph. J. Ursinowicz (2014)

Figure 10. Vladimir. The Cathedral of Saint Demetrius. Photo: J. Ursinowicz (2014)

Another manifestation of similar processes of synthesis of arts may be the raising of various iconic sculptural signs and relief scenes directly from the walls of a temple, maintaining, nonetheless, the integrity of their theological interpretation of expression. Examples include beautiful Orthodox churches in Moscow (Figure 8), Vladimir (Figure 10), Yuryev-Polsky and Yaroslavl as well as Georgian and Armenian and Western Romanesque churches deriving their origins from them.

Figure 11. Białystok. Orthodox church of the Resurrection. Design: J. Ursinowicz (2008). Ph. J.U.

Figure 12. Turin. Santo Volto Roman-Catholic church. The altar walls, design: M. Botta. (2006)

Figure 13. Mielnik. Holy Trinity Roman-Catholic church. Design of reconstruct.: J. Ursinowicz (2017)

A more contemporary example of this kind of activity is raising reliefs from a pointed brick wall texture. Orthodox church of the Resurrection in Białystok (Figure 11) and orthodox church of the Protection of the Holy Virgin in Bielsk Podlaski (Figure 9), or the ingenious representation of the Image of Edessa (Mandylion), today called the Shroud of Turin, by Mario Botta on the altar wall of Santo Volto church in Turin. The image of Christ’s face from the Mandylion received an abstract, almost digital appearance, being a pixelated spatial structure which, behaving like a hologram, arranges itself into groups of geometric divisions of angelic abstracts – dark and light, sticking out from the surface of the wall and remaining flat in the shade (Figure 12).

As far as the perception of its iconographic vision of the New Jerusalem on the level of the temple as a whole is concerned, it is contemporarily superbly demonstrated, albeit in a slightly different way,
also by monumental art and iconic realisations of Jerzy Nowosielski, created on wooden panelling and pointed brick, as well as on icons non-primed with lewkas in numerous Orthodox and Roman-Catholic churches. The movement here, however, is in the opposite direction. Although we seem to feel the matter transpiring through the paints of an icon or a fresco, they are actually the driving force here. They lead to divinization of the matter, bringing it out of sin and introducing it to another, divine world.

Figure 14. Kostroma. Ipatiev Monastery Museum. Spatial icon-sculpture. Ph. J.Uścinowicz (2013)

Figure 15. Kraków-Azory. Roman-Catholic church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Iconography: Jerzy Nowosielski. Photo. J.Uścinowicz (2008)

Figure 16. Kraków. Orthodox church of the Dormition of Mother of God. Iconography: J. Nowosielski. Photo. J.Uścinowicz (2012)

The innovative Stations of the Cross in the Roman-Catholic church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Kraków-Azory (Figure 15) and polychromes in the refectory of the Orthodox church Dormition of the Mother of God in Kraków (Figure 16) are truly fascinating. Live wood is like a golden background for the figures and scenes. The Stations of the Cross and the large, rectangular altarpiece, panneau retabulum, where three last stations ‘take place’, are painted immediately on the pine wood panneau. Exposed wood grain and board pointing, dark knots and golden hue of wood are remindful of the heavenly gold of the Orthodox icon. It is a live transmission and radiation of ‘God’s Glory’. Nowosielski uses similar exposure convention also in the refectory of the Orthodox church in Kraków. Beautiful, glazed polychromes on full height horizontal panelling made of larch wood boards, without any geometric divisions, are an innovative artwork, not limited by historical aesthetic canon. Entirely original, unique, as far as the convention of iconic imaging, it evokes the sanctified in Orthodox tradition provisions of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which paved way for the future.

The use of pointed brick wall textures as the background for iconographic works found its innovative application also in other temples. The Greek-Catholic church in Górowo-Iławeckie (Figure 17), as well as the small hermitage chapel of the in Poletyły (Figure 18), which is recently in realization, may serve as examples. In the latter, the design includes an immense Our Lady of the Sign of the Yaroslavl Panagia type, in the majestic pose of Orans Blacherniotissa, with a central stained-glass Christ Emmanuel Mandylion on her bosom on the Eastern apse brick wall. This seems to be a revolutionary innovation in relation to the past imaging convention, connecting theological meaning of reflection and transparency on both iconic planes at the same time – the convention of iconic polychrome and also stained-glass icon.
A continuation of that transformational convention of transparency and reflection we will find in the project for the reconstruction of the interior of the Roman-Catholic church of the Holy Trinity in Mielnik (Figure 13). Here, the image of the Holy Trinity, commanded by the church founder, is depicted in the form of a spatial overlap of planes – Crucifixion Scene on the rood beam and the symbolic images of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove and God the Father in the form of Hand of God (Manus Dei, Dextera dei) on the stained-glass Eastern altar window. Not far from the Mielnik castle there used to be an Orthodox church of the Resurrection (Figure 19). As a symbolic monument of that presence there is a memorial chapel with an innovative transposition of the altar arch. Here the iconostasis, sanctioned into the canon, became a symbol-sign of the old templon. The apse and the dome are entirely filled by an icon. History has come full circle.

All those examples of integration of different conventions of representing sacral visions through transparency and reflection of light involve a synthesis of many forms of artistic expression from different eras and styles, different origins, rites, confessions and traditions: Classical Art, Byzantium, as well as the art of free artistic creation given to us by Islam and – free from all limitations of historical canons – modern art of the 20th century. Today it is impossible to isolate, separate or draw a line between different kinds of creative arts. They give life to one another, develop through mutual contact in synthesis. In their continued quest for the best way to represent the revealed truth, truth, which through that beauty takes us closer to salvation.

6. Conclusions

- A person’s life is marked with symbols. In the domain of sacrum, in the temple, life is realized through holy symbols. They have their special compensation in the temple and vice versa; the temple is a concrete manifestation of the function of a symbol.
- We need tradition and the canons, we need to be reminded of holy symbols. If the sacral art is to provide an authentic description of theophanic reality and, at the same time, if it is to be a source of all human metaphysical experience and not only intellectual speculation or a mere naturalistic representation of things, we have to find a way of regaining harmony with former symbols.
- Art is a constant movement between religion and aesthetics. First in the process of artistic creation, then – in reception. At that moment it ceases to be a work of art, because it is
elevated to the level of theological, sacral, liturgical sphere. Just as ‘beauty may be subject to something greater than itself when it reaches the level of Divine truths’ [10], also art does not have its own reality. If it is a living symbol, it becomes a sacrament. In history, whenever art fell into degradation it did so not because it was a product of any given era, but because of losing its priestly function of being theophanic. In order for religious art to become a true representation of theophanic reality, to be a source of spiritual, metaphysical experience for man, and not a mere speculation of intellect or a naturalistic depiction of reality – it must become symbolic. Then it becomes theology, theology of expression through art [11].

- The new symbol seems to be entering our Orthodox contemporary temples permanently. It becomes needed, or even indispensable. It seems, that it is not only a symptom of an activity but also a noticeable, ever-progressing process. A person’s life is marked with symbols. In the domain of sacrum, in the temple, life is realized through holy symbols. They have their special compensation in the temple and vice versa; the temple is a concrete manifestation of the function of a symbol. We need tradition, we need to be reminded of holy symbols. If the sacral art is to provide an authentic description of theophany reality and, at the same time, if it is to be a source of all human metaphysical experience and not only intellectual speculation or a mere naturalistic representation of things, we have to find a way of regaining harmony with former symbols [12].

Acknowledgment
This research was realized by the scientific project S/WA/3/2016 with the financial support of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education

References
[1] All Bible quotes from English Standard Version.
[2] N. Berdyaev, „The Truth of Orthodoxy“, Messager de l’Exarchat du Patriarche Russe en Europe Occidentale, nr 11, 1952, (in French).
[3] M. Eliade, “Treatise on the history of religion”, OPUS 1993, „Książka i Wiedza”, p. 429, passim, 1966, (in Polish).
[4] P. Evdokimov, “The Orthodox Church” (transl. by J. Klinger), PAX, Warszawa, p. 260, 1986.
[5] Saint John of Damascus, “Orthodox Faith” II, 3, (in French).
[6] Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, “The Celestial Hierarchy“, 3, IX, § 2 Moscow, pp. 38-39, 1848.
[7] Compare S. S. Averinëw, “Gold in the system of symbols of early Byzantine culture”, (in:) Byzantium. Southern Slavs and ancient Russia, "Science", Moscow 1973, (in Russian).
[8] J. Uścinowicz, “Symbol, archetype, structure. Hermeneutics of tradition in the architecture of the orthodox temple”, BUT, Białystok, pp. 128-130, 225–227, 240–241, 1997, (in Polish).
[9] Compare P. Evdokimov, “The art of the icon – theology of beauty”, Novum 1-2/1984, p. 258, 1984, (in Polish).
[10] W. Stróżewski, “Artistic and over-esthetic value”, Warsaw, p. 43, 1986, (in Polish).
[11] L. Ouspensky, “Theology of the icon in the Orthodox Church”, Paris, p.10, 1980, (in French).
[12] Compare E. Устинович, “Old times have passed. Now everything is new”, St. Petersburg, pp. 135–141, 2017, (in Russian).