

Images of Eschatology in Antanas Vivulskis' (1877–1919) Apparition Chapel in Šiluva

Kastytis Rudokas*

Kaunas University of Technology, Kaunas, Lithuania

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Abstract

This article aims to discuss, through the method of hermeneutic analysis, the nature of Christian eschatology as an observer's choice in perceiving architectural objects and how this process expands the semantic meanings of an original architectural creation. These meanings may have been implied by the architect but are not necessarily intentional. To explore this issue, the study focuses on the only surviving architectural work by the Lithuanian-Polish architect Antanas Vivulskis – the Chapel of the Apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Šiluva (1903–1924) – and the visual solution from the Šiluva Pilgrimage Centre's communication campaign: the conceptual architectural work titled *The Cube*.

Introduction

The relationship between architecture and eschatology can be traced back to the earliest structures built by ancient humans [1]. This paper focuses on the issue of Christian Catholic eschatology, to distinctly expound the whole concept; however, in the text, a general concept of this definition is used, mostly expressed in theological and philosophic concerns of a final destiny of the World that transcends physical limitations of [corpo]reality. Thus, the question could be raised immediately if architecture and eschatology could ever be harmoniously linked.

In his monograph, *Total City*, K. Rudokas [2] has emphasised that the initial moment of building a very first structure – the seeking to enclose from nature – can be considered as both: an act of metaphysical thinking and, to some degree, seeking to act in an eschatological way. Moreover, B. Hillier [3] has championed that ancient-like and primitive structures, such as the yurt of Mongols, by deep aspiration to include cosmic structure into a simple yurt's design and mimic it, is an eschatology-wise effort to experience living in total univocity with surroundings. And by doing that, the Mongol, to some extent, sustains, redeems and causes the cosmos to exist.

Moreover, another prominent thinker of architecture and urbanism, Ch. Alexander [4], noted that even the most holy or sacred object, found in particular urban fabric, has been eschatology-like only in one case if it

affects transformations of its surroundings. V. Ganiatsas [5] championed that every architectural heritage object must be considered as an ethical imperative to its urban surroundings. Thus, the building's temporal perspective has now been shifted from merely being an attribute of the past into the realm of the future.

Eschatology here is to be understood as a very profound contradiction to what heritage professionals call authenticity. The best case of this contradiction, in western tradition, can be perceived in early monasteries of Benedictine rule – by applying eschatological images of New Heavenly Jerusalem (which is the topic of this paper), mostly described in the last book of Holy Scripture – the Apparition to John (Revelation 21), fraters had sought to mimic structure of that unearthly city, however, by imposing universal urban layout they, unintentionally, denied authenticity of form and design in the grand scale of planning [6].

In this paper, I will argue that eschatology can be compatible in one particular building in both domains of architectural language. First off, the artistic form, intentionally or intuitively, can be hermeneutically perceived as having images and motifs linking architectural design to the eschatological realm. Nevertheless, the reception, being the second domain of architectural language, of the building due to its functional purpose and ability to shape both physical and mental surroundings, can confirm and foment visual eschatological elements of architecture and design forms.

* Corresponding author. E-mail address: kastytis.rudokas@ktu.lt

The research aims to find and discuss eschatological images and motifs in the only intact architectural work of prominent Lithuanian-Polish architect and sculptor Antanas Vivulskis, the St. Mary Apparition chapel in Šiluva (project 1903–1906, completed and consecrated in 1924, after the architect's death), Lithuania. The place itself is of major importance to the Catholic faith and tradition in Lithuania, since it is believed that the pivotal moment took place in 1608, when St. Mary appeared in the fields of Šiluva holding baby Jesus. The Chapel was built on the exact spot 300 years later. Therefore, the genius loci of the place itself have been pervaded by the presence of miracle and, to some extent, eschatological presence since the miracle itself is the most crucial and ultimate event in the history of the Shrine. We will use the method of hermeneutic thinking to achieve our objectivity – to harmoniously link architecture and the concept of eschatology.

I. Brief Spiritual History of Šiluva

The history of the town dates back to the mid-15th century, with regard to the first Catholic church being built there. However, with the advent of the Reformation movement, the Calvinist denomination strengthened, and by the beginning of the 17th century, almost the entire town was in the hands of Calvinists, who, as claimed, illegally expropriated Catholic lands, and only very few Catholics had left [7].

The pivotal moment took place in 1608 when St. Mary appeared on the stone, crying and holding baby Jesus, in the fields of Šiluva. First off, she appeared to two little shepherds who saw a girl dressed in clothes that had an unearthly splendour of their colour and fabric. Being scared, the children asked for a Calvinist pastor and teacher to come and investigate the case they had seen. When they arrived, St Mary had been there and kept crying. The pastor asked her why she was crying. She responded: "Earlier, my Son was worshipped in this field, but now it is ploughed and sown." After having said these words, she vanished.

From that particular moment, the spiritual history of Šiluva has extended into many domains of importance, both metaphysical and historical.

First off, Šiluva has been known as a place of miraculous healing since Our Lady of Šiluva holds the title of the Health of the Sick [8, 59]. Soon after the apparition, Šiluva was made into the most important sanctuary in Lithuania [9]. In two books printed during the interwar period, it was emphasised that since the apparition until the 19th century, all the miraculous events had been precisely recorded and investigated, confirming the verity of those events. However, the record book that was mentioned in these two prints had been lost; therefore, the first written authentic testimonies reach our days since the end of the 19th century [10].

The second aspect relates to historical events that have been taking place in the town. During the Russian occupation in periods of tsardom and later of the Soviet Union, Šiluva had been a significant place of resistance, being one of the core points of book bringers or partisan resistance during the Soviet occupation. Despite its being a tiny town on an urban scale, the faith that has been present here, catalysed various actions of resistance during the unfavourable history of the Lithuanian people [10].

The current communication strategy of the Šiluva Shrine also relies on the use of faith heritage and tradition. Since 2019, in collaboration with various governmental institutions, arts and cultural organisations, and the higher education sector, the concept of "living pilgrimage" has been developed. The communication message of the "living pilgrimage" is based on the methodology of pilgrimage as an inclusive and comprehensive way of life and organisational approach to activities that have little to no relation to religious practices. Its goal is to use a wide variety of events not only to encourage deeper knowledge of Šiluva's history and culture but also to integrate aspects of evangelisation into seemingly unrelated activities. These range from scientific conferences to contemporary art performances and interdisciplinary events [11].

During the Grand Feast of Our Lady of Šiluva, which takes place every year in September, and this tradition has been alive for more than 400 years, every year more than 50 000 pilgrims and worshipers gather from Lithuania and the rest of the Catholic world.

II. Eschatology and Its Presence in Šiluva. Metaphor of One Cup and Two Cups

To define the issue of Catholic eschatology, we will rely on Joseph Ratzinger's notion of eschatological time, or say, a manner of being already within the eschatological realm. First off, Ratzinger notes that eschatological presence has a twofold structure and is superpresent in two different points in the historical timeline. The first eschatological moment is the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. His passion and death upon the Cross were a significant moment that transfigures the spiritual and corporeal history of all the creation [12]. However, complete salvation is yet to come at the End of the World, during the Second Coming and the last judgment day. Thus, the being in eschatological state is yet present, meanwhile it needs to be waited for [13], [14].

This suggests that to reach the complete eschatology person needs to put effort into it [15, 56–72]. David DeSilva [16] argues in relation to the concept "once saved – always saved" regarding redemption performed by Christ, we still need to ask: "when saved". Here we are required to emphasise that being completely saved or redeemed means being in an eschatological state. Now, returning briefly to the context of the Apparition of Šiluva, it can be argued that

Mary's message, emphasising the essence of worshipping the Son within the framework of everyday utilitarian work, serves as a more or less direct invitation to participate in the work of one's own salvation. This work is not merely physical but spiritual; however, not overestimating the spiritual domain. In other words, it is a reminder that, on the one hand, no one can earn an eschatological state through their efforts alone, as the possibility of entering Heaven (the eschatological city – the New Heavenly Jerusalem) is attainable solely through God's mercy. On the other hand, it underscores the importance of earthly life and the pursuit of salvation here on Earth through worship of the Son.

The “when” occurs when a person, by assuming the being of creation (as described by Garrigues [17]), simultaneously embraces an intention to step partially beyond the being of creation itself. While such an effort in earthly life does not guarantee an immediate vision of the New Jerusalem, a person's free decision to live in the longing for redemption renders him, in a sense, immortal. This is due to, as J. Ratzinger suggests, a unique connectedness to God. The Spanish mystics, such as Teresa de Avila, argued that fulfilment of a human being while on Earth is possible due to their validated effort to only remain the thought in Trinity's mind, at that particular moment in eternity when God stopped, took a break and decided to make humans in the image and likeness of their own [6].

The above-mentioned reduction of corporeal human doesn't diminish the idea of everyday life that everyone has experienced on earth [18]. According to Rudokas [19, 55], this implication, to only remain the thought in Trinity's mind, allows one to see a path to what he calls “the whole human being”. The “whole human being” has not yet achieved the eschatological state nor has been redeemed completely. But by contemplating himself/herself in the following formulae, that

“whole human being equals all the humanity minus that one particular human being”,

that one particular human being is on his/her way to achieve a close-to-eschatological state of being in that way, which was noted by Ratzinger. He emphasises that Heaven, or the City of New Jerusalem, represents a unified body of Christ in which individuals and even the universe exist as a single entity. This unity, however, preserves the distinct personhood of each being rather than merely binding them together in a collective.

Therefore, we can conclude that eschatology is such a state of being or such a space of events taking place, where a human being is totally whole. By claiming “totally whole” we could emphasise it by suggesting that, in given terms, a human being is in the state of superposition, where he/she is a distinct person, meanwhile being a totally integral part of the body of Christ, who himself is Heaven – the ultimate entity. To clarify that, we can add a metaphor of one cup that paradoxically has been able to contain the volume of two cups of the same size as that initial cup.

III. From Christian Eschatology to the [Non] Possibility of Eschatology in Architecture

As elaborated by Phillip Sheldrake [20], architecture and the city, which is made out of distinct architectural elements, operate similarly to that of Heaven. To add more clarity, we can note that urbanism, in general, represents ontic ability to juxtapose different temporal points [buildings] in the same space [urban complex], which basically means that two or more buildings of different eras can be standing close to each other or even make an integral urban complex. However, the objectivity of any particular city is different from what we have elaborated above. A city is an object of practical action, and the nature of these actions implies that even by transforming and altering physical or social aspects of urbanism, classical urbanism does not offer anything that would transcend physical or psychological needs [21, 90].

An architectural object, even one considered an exceptional cultural property, can be fully authentic when it has completely faded, signifying that it has undergone all phases of existence, with fading being one of them [22]. Even if this statement could be argued by many scholars emphasising the “here and now” existence and authenticity of any particular building or urban complex, we could note that within the limits of our own civilizational progress, we observe a pervasive nature of alteration of any property. As elaborated by Rudokas [23], both the semantic and physical qualities of buildings are subject to change, as any social, infrastructural, technical, or paradigmatic alterations in society inevitably influence a building's form, perception, and reception. Moreover, the building changes in terms of the influence of its function, of its status and of its geographic location in the city.

Therefore, fading, to a greater or lesser degree, is an inevitable destiny, which could potentially lead society to its teleological state – although this is highly doubtful, as all utopias that have long since fallen were grounded in the notion of creating a heaven on Earth, or to some approximation of a teleological state. However, eschatology would never be the focus in this context.

However, in the introduction, the opposite aspect of the architecture was mentioned, suggesting that even the earliest settlements established by indigenous peoples embodied both eschatological elements and a sense of transcendental activity. This occurred as a result of their inherent drive to transcend the limitations superimposed upon humanity by nature. In the Judeo-Christian view, the “otherly other” would be considered akin to “the most sacred” chamber in the tabernacle of Moses or the tabernacle present in every Catholic church. However, for the most sacred inner space of a building to exist, the perceiver must be willing to accept that reality – or, in terms of physics, must choose to observe this particular reality for it to manifest [24, 236]. Indeed, the first action

of enclosure from nature was nothing more than the determination to choose to first observe a different reality than that provided by nature, and then to shape it, to call it to physical manifestation.

Within the Catholic tradition and teaching, the innermost space of the church or chapel is regarded as a place of mystery, where the Word is redeemed through the deeds of Christ, yet remains a promise yet to be fulfilled, in the sense of being transparently manifested. Indeed, since the identity of the first builder of the very first structure will remain unknown forever, we can only imagine their lack of explicit knowledge and the sense of uncertainty they must have felt when beginning the construction of that particular structure. Neither the Christian, the believer, nor the traditional Catholic, without a living faith, can truly comprehend what is contained within the tabernacle. Thus, an eschatological architectural object, if such an object exists, cannot undergo decay like other architectural objects due to the presence of the eschatological entity “here and now,” as its reality has not yet fully manifested.

IV. The Apparition Chapel of Our Lady of Šiluva. Optional Eschatology?

As the study has demonstrated, we can establish a connection between architectural action and the concept of eschatology, to some extent, as an ambivalent relationship. On the one hand, general urban theory denies the possibility of eschatology occurring or manifesting explicitly. However, the origins of constructing artificial structures are deeply rooted in humanity's vocation for eschatological action. Moreover, eschatology “can” occur only if the perceiver opts to observe this ambivalence as a state of superposition – already having been manifested and yet still being a matter to be awaited. In the following case study, we aim to highlight the extent to which the Apparition Chapel (Fig. 1) – the first created and the only intact building by the renowned Lithuanian-Polish architect Antanas Vivulskis – can be hermeneutically interpreted by the observer as an eschatological entity.



The architectural and conceptual framework of the Apparition Chapel of Our Lady of Šiluva was examined by notable Lithuanian (Lukšionytė [25], [26], Sakalauskas [27]) and Polish (Poklewski [28]) scholars. The consensus agrees that this building features hardly coherent qualities, and yet nonetheless the architect A. Vivulskis was able to achieve architectural harmony. Having been trained both as an architect and as a sculptor in Austria and later in France, he has always sought to achieve the transcendent form and sense in his works [26]. It is worth noting that the author, a devout Catholic who sought to follow the example of Jesus Christ not only in his career but in his life as a whole, sacrificed his life to save a friend from military service while fighting the Bolsheviks in Vilnius during the winter of 1919, despite being the leading architect of the largest church construction project in Vilnius at the time.

The inspiration to seek mystic and metaphysical appearances has always been a task to be achieved in his works, in the field of architecture as well as in sculpture. Beginning an examination of the architectural language of the Apparition Chapel, it is important to note that most Lithuanian scholars agree that this building can be regarded as the only example of Lithuanian “protomodernism” in architecture, showcasing a subtle coherence between innovation and tradition [29]. Later, Kaunas’ modernism of the interwar period would evolve into a significant architectural epoch in Lithuanian history and, by 2023, was recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The following four features could be noted to describe the uniqueness of this masterpiece.

A. The Unveiling of Innovation of Architectural Language

Innovation is achieved subtly and unconventionally by incorporating a diverse linguistic range of historical and archetypal architectural styles into the composition. Researchers emphasise that elements of French and English Gothic, ancient Egyptian column motifs, Byzantine and Eastern church art motifs, motifs of ethnic Lithuanian architecture, as well as the stylistic features of Art Nouveau, can be observed here [29]. The novelty in architecture is not based on the rejection of historical tradition, as seen in the works of modernist pioneers like Peter Behrens. Rather, Vivulskis seeks new forms by embracing, rather than discarding, historical styles. In fact, one could compare the work of Antanas Vivulskis with that of Otto Wagner and the renowned Slovenian architect Jože Plečnik [29]. A. Vivulskis' innovation does not rely on the mere citation or sole reference to history but is instead grounded in a

Fig. 1. The Apparition Chapel in Šiluva (1903–1924). Architect Antanas Vivulskis.

Christian eschatological understanding of history, where history is unified within a singular entity – Heaven-like structure. It represents a kind of metaphysical effort not to change, cite, or interpret history, but to complete and, to some extent, redeem it.

B. Similarity and Juxtaposition of Figures

Architectural harmony of form is achieved through the use of various stylistic citations, as well as the subtle integration of open and solid planes within the overall composition and individual facades. A large scale is often juxtaposed with unusually small details, creating what might be called a “hyper-contrast” effect. Another important aspect is the compatibility of pointed-arch windows and facade openings with the extensive use of semi-circular arch motifs. This effectively merges classical orders – symbolising the human sphere of influence – with the language of medieval architecture, representing a sort of divine domain. However, the most subtle innovation introduced by A. Vivulskis lies in the fusion of the tower as an architectural element and the cross as a sculptural motif into one integrated whole. If Antonio Gaudí’s architectural invention can be considered the introduction of the parabolic arch into the language of architectural mass, as written by Huerta [31], then in Vivulskis’ architecture, the tower becomes the sculptural cross. The clear and unprecedented synthesis of sculpture and architecture in the region stands as the author’s primary innovation, achieved with full intentionality. Lithuanian *koplytstulpis* – a symbol and sculptural element deeply significant to the country’s ethnic culture and Catholic tradition could be seen as an inspirational source for the Chapel’s project [28].

One could argue that Vivulskis achieves what later Bauhaus or De Stijl masters in Germany and the Netherlands would strive for: the complete synthesis of the arts in architecture. Such aspirations are also evident in the larger project of the Vilnius Church of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, especially in the design of its tower. To some extent, he foresaw the future by embracing the historic architectural language, demonstrating how the future could have unfolded if this tradition had not been seen as an obstacle, but rather as a profound source of innovation for creating something beyond.

C. Conceptualising Lithuanian Identity

Vivulskis is a conceptual architect whose primary aim was to convey the spirit of Lithuanian identity by drawing on the expressive means of Lithuania’s ethnic architectural traditions. It is significant that the architect and sculptor did not employ specific forms characteristic of ethnic architecture but sought to capture the essence of Lithuanian identity through the heavy mass of the main facade, which simultaneously functions as a sculptural object – a cross.

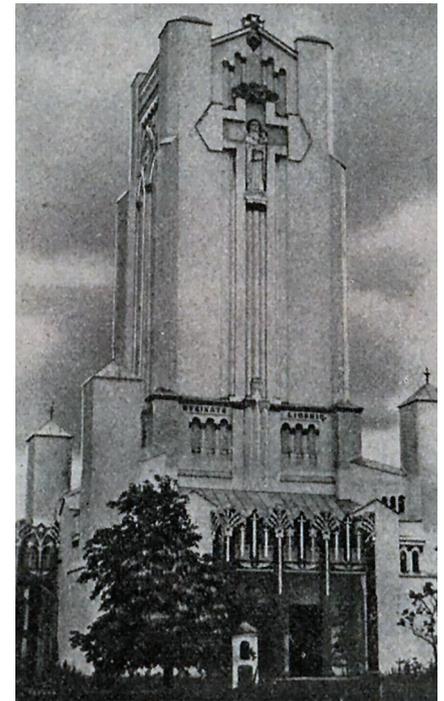


Fig. 2. A historic photo depicts wooden portals that have not been preserved. Portals were lost during the reconstruction in 1958.

A particularly distinctive element was the now-lost wooden portals (Fig. 2), which originally adorned all four facades of the chapel. These were replaced with new masonry portals during the 1958 reconstruction project. The porticos were expressive and picturesque, achieving a subtle interplay of wooden and masonry architecture reminiscent of the famous balconies of Lima. A key feature of the wooden porticos was the depiction of seraphim and cherubim, as well as sword motifs. According to A. Vivulskis’s vision, the chapel’s interior was to include sculptural bas-reliefs depicting an army of angels armed with swords (Fig. 3) encircling the entire perimeter of the interior.



Fig. 3. Picture of a model of an angel's sculptures. 24 of those must have decorated the interior of the chapel according to the initial concept of A. Vivulskis.

The angel – understood as a spiritual being capable of beholding God directly – was employed here as a herald of freedom for Lithuania, which at the time was under Russian imperial occupation. Despite the unfavourable political circumstances of the period (1903–1906) for expressing ideas of freedom, A. Vivulskis was already firmly convinced that Heaven had decreed Lithuania's liberation. This conveys an eschatological intuition, where the signs of change remain absent in the corporeal world, yet the decisive event that ensures this transformation has already occurred.

D. The Cuboid and the Heavenly City

The connotations of Lithuanian identity, as noted by some scholars, are also evident in the overall architectural composition of the building, where certain researchers [28] identify motifs resembling the Pillars of Gediminas – a symbol of the ancient royal lineage of Lithuania.

However, when discussing the architecture of the Chapel in the context of Christian eschatology, the lower segment of the building's volume reveals an implied cuboidal form. The pilasters at the four corners of the building create a nearly perfect cubic volume, which is followed by the rising tower-sculpture (which was also called The White Tower of David, one of many titles of St. Mary) [32]. From a hermeneutic perspective, the cuboid evokes the image of the Heavenly City – the New Jerusalem – described in the Book of Revelation as the ultimate paradise [33].

It is important to note that the Book of Revelation mentions that, despite the fact that the city of the New Jerusalem is described as being “entirely new” – emphasising its descent from heaven to Earth and its incomprehensibly vast scale – it will also house the treasures and riches of the nations. In the eschatological context, Vivulskis's sensibility for the synthesis of different arts and the harmonisation of diverse architectural styles acquires an even greater artistic intensity, enriching the conceptual and symbolic depth of his work.

Suppose the above-mentioned architectural solutions, with their innovative yet tradition-absorbing elements, could be regarded as intentional expressions of the architect's vision, then the image of the New Jerusalem emerges as the result of the architect's intuitive sensibility. This imagery, uncovered through hermeneutic analysis and a conceptual architectural inquiry project, now strengthens the eschatological narrative underpinning the communicative strategy of the Shrine of Šiluva.

Having delineated these four foundational aspects of the Šiluva Chapel, namely (a) the innovations introduced by A. Vivulskis, and (b) their contextualisation within the Catholic eschatological framework, we can draw an interim conclusion that the eschatological specificity of the building is manifested through its bidirectional communicative capacity in terms of temporal reach.

First, the Chapel of the Apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary engages with the past, encompassing the broadest possible archetypal, historical, architectural, and cultural dimensions while simultaneously serving as a temporal marker of its era – the early 20th century. Second, this cultural landmark, shaped by A. Vivulskis's eschatological intuition, is also an object oriented toward the future.

Primarily, this forward orientation suggests that the building is dynamic in the sense that it remains open to interpretive-hermeneutic augmentation by its perceivers. In a certain sense, the object is entirely complete, yet it possesses a distinctive kenotic quality. This kenosis can be understood as an attempt to emulate the reality of God, whereby, in this case, the eschatological reality of the New Heavenly Jerusalem unfolds well after the building itself was created.

V. The Cube – a Conceptual Architectural Extension of Eschatology of Apparition Chapel

The eschatological dimension of A. Vivulskis's architectural language, particularly the embodiment of the New Jerusalem – the Heavenly City – within the design of the Apparition Chapel, has been accentuated in the conceptual work *The Cube* (Fig. 4) by Kęstutis Vaišnoras and Kastytis Rudokas. This abstract cuboid form represents the eschatological city described in the Book of Revelation [33, Chapters 21 and 22] and delineates the lower section of the Chapel. As previously highlighted, the cuboid is suggested not only through its architectural mass but also through the lack of it. These voids (space that is not filled with physical architectural mass) can be interpreted as a moment of kenosis – a form of self-limitation or emptying – leaving space for potential future creation. In *The Cube*, two planes of reality are intentionally

Fig. 4. *The Cube*. Ground view. Representation of Heavenly City – The New Jerusalem – merged with a work of Antanas Vivulskis. Emphasis has been put on the superposition of God's concealment and revelation. Authors Kęstutis Vaišnoras (architect), Kastytis Rudokas (consultant), 2024.



merged: a) A. Vivulskis's original architectural language and design are preserved and emphasised; b) this is now overlaid with the reality of the Divine City.

Thus, the project draws upon Revelation 21:26: "The treasure and wealth of the nations will be brought there." Accordingly, The Cube echoes the fundamental principle articulated by the Virgin Mary during her apparition in Šiluva in 1608: that the history and outcome of salvation are not solely within the domain of Divine action but require active human participation.

In this interpretation, human effort is understood as an active existence in prayer and worship of Jesus Christ. According to the teachings of the Catholic Church, the concept of superposition – where two natures coexist within a single person – is a recurrent structural theme. For instance, Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully human (hypostatic union). Similarly, God the Father and God the Son are united in essence (gr. homoousios), yet remain distinct persons. Moreover, in the eschatological context, St. Paul's letters emphasise a critical principle: the Church, as humanity, is both the Body of Christ and His Bride, while the entirety of Christ (totus Christus) includes both Christ and the Church [34, §§461–468, 795].

In The Cube, this principle is expressed through the eschatological condition of fulfilment: the necessity of human participation and the predestined presence of human creativity in the Heavenly City. This aligns with the theological understanding that the completion of salvation involves not only divine action but also requires active human engagement. Such engagement is envisioned as humanity's integral role in the co-creation of the New Jerusalem, manifesting the dual realities of divine and human cooperation in the final eschaton.

VI. Heterarchy as a Feature of Apparition Chapel, The Cube and the Eschaton

The Pilgrim Centre of Šiluva will base its 2025 communication program on an invitation for pilgrims and tourists to reflect on the concept of eschatology and humanity's role in striving for this transcendent reality. The Cube project is specifically designed to serve this purpose. This communication effort, supported by various activities, emphasises an appeal for individuals to actively engage in prayer and contemplation, reflecting on humanity's importance in God's plan as both a creation and a participant.

Building on the architectural language of the Apparition Chapel, which reflects a synthesis of artistic forms and temporal dimensions – including the future – The Cube project can be interpreted as a non-hierarchical representation of Heaven's reality. Within this vision of Heaven, a significant portion of human artefacts, expressed through A. Vivulskis's architectural language, are given

a prominent place. This project, which aims not to depict what is physically possible but rather to reveal what transcends physical limitations, can be compared to the works of the renowned American conceptual architect Lebbeus Woods. L. Woods [35] himself describes his works as representations of what humanity could achieve if freed from the impositions of physical reality.

Woods refers to his conceptual architectural approach as heterarchy (ibid.). Heterarchy does not reject hierarchy but introduces a dynamic element into the typically static notion of hierarchy. It represents a form of hierarchy where, depending on the needs of the moment, the hierarchical relationships between components of a unified structure can shift freely and adaptively. Heterarchy can also be identified in the content of St. Paul's letters, particularly in his discussion of the Church as the Body of Christ, both in its organisational principles on Earth and in its ultimate realisation in Heaven, as well as can be felt in the architectural work of A. Vivulskis.

CONCLUSIONS

The potential for linking Christian eschatological ideas with architectural language remains an open question for further research. However, it can be argued that the eschatological nature of a building largely depends on how the observer chooses to perceive reality. On the other hand, both the choice of architectural language and the architect's intentions in selecting certain forms of formal expression can increase or decrease the immaterial content that may arise in the viewer's consciousness.

In the case of the Apparition Chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Šiluva, designed by A. Vivulskis, the synthesis of styles, the attempt to reveal national and Lithuanian cultural-archetypal elements, as well as the integration of the arts (marking the first historical fusion of architecture and sculpture in Lithuanian architectural history), achieves a form of architectural expression that could be described as architectural singularity.

This means that the global treasury of architecture is condensed into a single spatial unit, creating immense architectural-artistic tension. The fact of the Apparition of the Virgin Mary in 1608, understood as an eschatological event in physical reality, reinforces this sense of singularity. Therefore, the eschatological dimension of this building – or rather the possibility of perceiving it – is inseparable from the semantics dictated by its function.

The impression of the New Jerusalem, which is less a deliberate intention of A. Vivulskis, and more an intuitive manifestation of his creative sensibility, was chosen as a focus for the conceptual architectural project The Cube. It is symbolic that exactly one hundred years after the consecration of the Apparition Chapel, this first conceptual architectural object (which nonetheless remains grounded

in historically grounded architectural forms) has become the subject of communication strategies based on artistic interpretation.

It was discussed that the pursuit of eschatology neutralises the traditionally perceived concept of authenticity in heritage theory and practice. Eschatology does not aim to create new, unique forms but rather seeks to endow what already exists with a renewed, redeemed reality. The Cube project, while seemingly violating the formal authenticity of the Chapel, serves as a reference point for previously unexplored qualities of A. Vivulskis's architectural work.

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Kastytis Rudokas is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Architecture and Construction, Kaunas University of Technology (KTU). His research focuses on the theory of heritage, urban metaphysics, and the philosophical dimensions of architecture. Rudokas explores how built environments

embody memory, transcend material form, and mediate between cultural identity and metaphysical meaning. His works integrate heritage theory with critical reflections on the spiritual and symbolic layers of urban space, aiming to reveal the ontological depth of the city as a living organism. He is the author of the scientific monograph *Total City* (2022), which investigates the concept of totality in urban structures through the lens of metaphysical realism. His academic activity includes participation in interdisciplinary projects linking heritage, architecture, and theology, contributing to the development of contemporary Lithuanian discourse on sacred space and the metaphysics of urban form.

Contact Data

Kastytis Rudokas

Email: kastytis.rudokas@ktu.lt

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3330-5727>