

Place of Worship as a Temple and Regulated Structure

A. W. Hupel as an
Architectural Appraiser

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Summary

Abstract: This article analyses the architectural ideals of the pastor August Wilhlem Hupel (1737–1819), a prominent representative of Livonian enlightenment, in their connections with historical-theological and aesthetic notions of architecture. Hupel did not emphasise Martin Luther's idea of the church as a space regulated according to social status; instead he preferred the requirements of architectural order and clarity that rely on the normative aesthetics of classicism and embody 'gute Geschmack'. The temple façade of Vaivara church, built in 1775–1777 (destroyed in 1944), exactly corresponds to both the theological symbolism as well as the architectural ideal of the era, being the first of its kind in Estonia.

The pastor of Põltsamaa/Oberpahlen congregation, August Wilhelm Hupel, writes in 1773 about Estonian churches (see quotations in the text) in his book *Topographische Nachrichten*. According to Hupel's description, Estonian churches had three parts: entrance hall (*Pronaos, Narthex*), nave (*Naos*) and choir (*Bema*). The venerable man of letters was not mistaken – the spatial structure of Christian architecture in Estonia, already 500 years old by the late 18th century, roughly corresponded to his description.

Hupel's writing could be seen as a sign of his supreme knowledge, but also more wide-

ly. What can this tell us about the understanding of church architecture of Hupel, a pastor and an educated person of the Enlightenment century? Does the meaning of the description only belong to the architectural theory, or does it reflect the understanding of the evangelical church space as a mirror of theology, as it were? Do we see a reflection of Hupel's opinions in the Estonian Lutheran church architecture in the last third of the 18th century? The article discusses these issues in order to provide Hupel's description of church architecture a wider context: examine it against the background of theological, architectural-theoretical and enlightenment ideas.

Theology and church building – 'architectural theology'

In 1718, the mathematician, philosopher and theologian Leonhard Christoph Sturm published a book *Vollständige Anweisung alle Arten von Kirchen wohl anzugeben*. It included a church project with a reference to the Temple of Jerusalem by the 17th century German mathematician Nicolai Goldmann, who taught at Leiden University. The project relied on prophet Ezekiel's description, born out of a vision sent by Jehovah. The Old Testament contains other architectural descriptions, amongst others the depictions of Solomon's temple (2 Chronicles 3: 4), with key words such as: *house of the Lord, numbers expressing the (divine) regularity, pillars, precious materials*. The 'mathematical' church with sparkling gold mosaics was built by emperor Justinian, who reputedly said after completing Hagia Sophia – the Church of Holy Wisdom: 'Solomon, I have surpassed you!' Almost the same sentence was used by the reformer Martin Luther in his consecration sermon of Torgau castle chapel, the only church he ever consecrated, in 1544: *Salomo*

hat nirgend so einen schönen Tempel gebauet als itzunder Torga hat. In the same sermon, Luther quoted the 84th psalm: 'How lovely are Thy habitations, Jehovah Sebaot! I long and yearn for the courts of the Lord!' (L 84), thus accepting the idea in the Old Testament – God is present in a temple, this is God's house. (The notion of God's House has survived in the German and Estonian languages to this day.) The above-mentioned is made ambivalent by Luther's other position that had to be clearly distinguished from the Catholic church practice so far: he namely claimed that it did not really matter where the word of God was professed, it might be actually done 'in the open air on top of a hill or by a well'.

Luther thus wanted to emphasise that instead of the Catholic concept of a holy place, for Lutherans the church building is primarily a congregational house. As shown by subsequent history, Luther's opinion was not enough to desacralise the evangelical church building. By the end of the 16th century, rather the opposite had happened: Luther's two above-mentioned concepts were joined, and a new concept of the church building as Lutheran 'holy place' emerged. Stressing the distancing from Catholic church and opposing the ideas of the Catholic reformation about architecture, another 'church theology' was worked out (see e.g. Philipp Arnold's *Ceremoniae Lutheranae*, 1616), which tackled the church as a holy place, a temple, where no lies are told (as do the Catholics), and where the servants of the word of God work. The current author is aware of only one church consecration sermon in Estonian territory, in 1636. This sermon was delivered by the Wittenberg-educated pastor Ludovicus Raspius (see quotations in the text) on the occasion of consecrating the Audru/Audern church. To Raspius, church space is not

sacred 'by itself', but because what goes on there, who takes part and how. The logic is quite similar to Lutheran instrumentalised treatment of pictures, where pictures were supposed to convey the theological truths of the doctrine.

Order

But let us return to Sturm's treatises, the most widely spread books of architecture in the German-language areas in the 18th century. The connection between architectural concepts in Sturm's treatises and the Lutheran theology, especially its treatment of congregations, is comprehensively analysed by Reinhold Wex in his monograph *Ordnung und Unfriede. Raumprobleme des protestantischen Kirchenbaus im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert in Deutschland*. Wex stresses that Sturm's approach to the issues of church architecture is both rational (i.e. regulating) and clearly follows Martin Luther's ideas of an evangelical church building and its task of being a congregational house.

What, however, was the theological content of the notion 'order', which architecture as one possible 'means of utterance', had to express? For Sturm, the order meant rules - dimensions, relations between bulks, just as the descriptions of temples in the scriptures. Secondly, order was evident in the construction of the church space that was supposed to correspond to the general God-created arrangement of the world. Architectural theoretic Sturm claimed that in that 'world', in accordance with Luther's concept of social status, higher social status had to be closer to the Word-God, i.e. the liturgical focus of church space, and people with a lower social status had to be further away, because this is how God himself organised the world.

Hupel's ideal church. Enlightenment and classicism

In 1777, A. W. Hupel claimed there were many beautiful churches in Estonia, naming the reconstructed Karksi/Karckus, Sangaste/Sagnitz and Simuna/St. Simonis, although the prettiest church in the whole of Livonia and Estonia was Vaivara/Waiwara. We can guess why if we recall the Hupel's description of Estonian churches quoted at the beginning. The churches of Sangaste, Karksi and Vaivara all have typical features of a temple. In external architecture this is primarily expressed in the two-pillar portico (Solomon's temple's Jakin and Boas!). Vaivara was the most beautiful probably because it was a true three-part 'temple', with an entrance hall under the porch, a nave and a narrow choir, where the 'temple motif' was in fact doubled – it was repeated in the architectural solution of the altar.

Vaivara church was built in 1775–1777. As was the norm, the money was donated by Count von Sievers, whose Lagena/Laagna or Vana-Vaivara manor had the church patronage. Unfortunately, the church was destroyed in 1944.

Vaivara caught Hupel's eye probably also because it was the only church known to him with double balconies in both naves, just like 'in the big cities'. Indeed, Vaivara church was the first Lutheran church building of its kind in Estonia, with next similar buildings emerging only in the 19th century. Vaivara was thus to Hupel's liking because the space was orderly, regulated, as expected of a proper Lutheran church (see quotations in the text). It is extraordinary that Hupel did not emphasise the aspect of social status in his description of Estonian church interiors; this was probably part of his attempt to democratise church in Livonia. In his writings about church liturgy Hupel also stressed the enlightening-

moralist aim of the church service. Favouring reforms, he no longer fully supported Martin Luther's ideas.

How could Hupel's opinions about church architecture be connected with the Enlightenment era and its 'spirit'? A. W. Hupel, graduate of the Jena University, is regarded as one of the main figures in the early Baltic Enlightenment, who rejected all 'radical extremes'. The historian Indrek Jürjo, borrowing a term from the German researcher K. Epstein, calls him reform-conservative. Together with the entire German Enlightenment and because he was a pastor, Hupel remained connected with religion, representing the so-called rational theology; atheism such as in the French Enlightenment, is not accepted by German Enlightenment and Hupel. 'As typical of the whole Enlightenment, the existence in Hupel's picture of the world was indestructible, rational and well regulated.'¹

Hupel proves himself as an enlightener who highly values education and knowledge in his well-known article *Der in Lief- und Ehistland zunehmende gute Geschmack*, written in 1787. He praises the good taste of various noblemen, if not expressed in the houses they have, then certainly at least in the 'projects (*Risse*) produced for themselves and the others that show their remarkable knowledge'. Knowing the 'rules of architecture', i.e. learning, improving oneself, is thus essential in achieving 'good architecture'. Among the 'knowledgeable', the article mentions herr Landrat von Sievers, the Õisu/Euseküll manor lord, whose relative Count von Sievers built the Vaivara church. Whether Count von Sievers actually produced the project himself is not quite clear, although it is certainly not impossible, especially when helped by,

¹ I. Jürjo, Liivimaa valgustaja August Wilhelm Hupel 1737–1819. Tallinn: Riigiarhiiv, 2004, lk. 430. My spacing – K.K.

for example, James Gibbs's book *A Book of Architecture* (1728), where the shape of Vairava church might easily have originated.

We can further speculate about Hupel's knowledge of classicist architectural theories that were, after all, a 'product' of the Enlightenment. It is not known whether pastor Hupel was familiar with Johann Winckelmann's writing extolling the antiquity. In any case, it should be emphasised that the second half of the 18th century witnessed a rapidly increasing number of architectural writings in Germany. A. W. Hupel's university period in Jena (1754–1757) coincided with the first decade of the period of architectural discussions, and this was obviously the time when foundations were laid for his later descriptions of church architecture and the principles of architectural values. Praising the Vairava church, Hupel captures the essential – the church building was indeed not merely 'beautiful', but also exceptional at the time of its completion in 1777. With its architecture that clearly indicated a new fascination with the antique, Vairava was the first church of its kind in Estonia!

Even if Hupel did not know Winckelmann's writings, he must have been familiar with the ideas of the architecture and art world of the Enlightenment. This is evident in the title of the already mentioned article, *zunehmende gute Geschmack*, i.e. using the term 'good taste'. Raising the issue of 'good taste' goes back to the time of the late 17th century French Royal Academy of Architecture, but was topical also in the next century (J. G. Fünck: *Betrachtungen über den wahren Geschmack der Alten in der Baukunst, und über desselben Verfall in neueren Zeiten*, 1747). Hupel also knew perfectly well that architecture means rules: *Unser vorher berühmten Gebäude geben schon die Vermutung, dass sich einige Männer aus dem hie-*

sigen Adel auf die schöne Baukunst gelegt haben, und deren Regeln (my spacing – K.K.) genugsam verstehen.

We can conclude, in sum, that August Wilhelm Hupel assesses Estonian church architecture as an educated and reform-minded enlightener and as a theologian. Hupel saw the need to 'reform' architecture towards 'truly beautiful' and expressed it by using in his church descriptions the antique/Vitruvian terminology and admiring church buildings adorned with pillars and décor. Such writings give the impression that Hupel wrote about church architecture as a modern aesthete rather than a theologian. On the other hand, Hupel also appreciated the tradition of Christian/Lutheran architecture. On the whole, Hupel was not much impressed by Martin Luther's understanding of a church building as a micro model of the regulated and orderly world, which also reflected the social status.

*Translated by Tiina Randviir
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