

St.Arbogast Church in Muttentz

Ladies and Gentlemen

I'd like to welcome you to the old village church of Muttentz, the St.Arbogast Church. It is the church of the protestant community. As you have seen, it is situated in the middle of the old part of the village . It constitutes the centre from which the streets lead in all directions.

First I'd like to ~~briefly~~ explain the architectural history and the wall paintings (murals), then I'd like to tell you something about the ring wall and in the end ^{to} show you the charnel-house chapel.

Up to the time of the Reformation, that is to say until the early 16th century, no written material exists which refers directly to the architectural history or to the painting of the church. ³⁰ 15 years ago, however, careful excavations were carried out in connection with a restoration. These revealed that a first little church stood on the ^{ground} floor of today's church around 800. This little church was enlarged several times until a bigger romanesque church was built ^{up} around 1200, the nearly square choir of ~~which~~ has been preserved.

At that time many romanesque churches were built in the whole region of the Upper Rhine. During that time also the Cathedral of Basle was ^{rebuilt} ~~renovated~~ in the romanesque style.

In the year 1356 ~~the city of Basle was destroyed in a powerful~~ ^{destroyed many buildings in Basle and the whole region} earthquake. This natural catastrophe also damaged many buildings in the surrounding area. The church of Muttentz was destroyed - at least partially - in this way, too.

After the earthquake the choir was revaulted and the previously round apsis was replaced by the rectangular ^{one} ~~choir~~. In the be-

ginning of the 16th century the nave was enlarged. In the course of the centuries smaller and larger renovations were carried out again and again. ~~Not all of them will be mentioned.~~

But I don't want to tell you about all those details.

As the ~~history of the church~~ ^{of} is closely connected with the history of the village Muttenz I'll touch up on it:

Since the early Middle Ages Muttenz belonged to the See of Strasburg. The fact that the church was consecrated to St. Arbogast, who was Strasburg's first bishop in the time around 600, shows this ^{close} connection clearly.

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St. Arbogast canonized and appointed to the Patron of the See of Strasburg. Belonging to the See of Strasburg Muttenz got this Alsatian Patron. In the beginning of the 14th century Muttenz came into the Habsburg's possession who passed it on as fief. The "Münch" family was one of the sokesmen who for about 150 years ruled over Muttenz. It was a member of this old family of noble lineage who saw to it that the church was rebuilt after the earthquake. He had his family's blazon - a monk - *it is the same word* and the heraldic animal of his wife's family - a lion - alternately painted on the ribs of the vaults.

Towards the end of the 15th century the "Münch" family became impoverished. They pawned their domain to the city of Basle and as they could not redeem their pledge, Muttenz came into possession of Basle in the 16th century. For nearly 300 years the city of Basle determined the ~~the~~ history of Muttenz and all structural alterations to the village church.

Let's have a look at the wall paintings now:

I restrict myself to explaining the series of pictures of the nave because in the choir only ^a few remains of the paintings are left to be seen.

It is only known when the series of paintings were painted, but not by whom. Near an apostle we can make out the date 1507. At that time the walls of the nave each had only one window. The white areas show you where they ~~must~~ have been. The wall paintings were about 20 years old when the Reformation took place in Basle, and as Muttentz already belonged to Basle it was reformed, too. Religious pictures weren't tolerated in a reformed church, this is why they were painted over. So they could only be seen shortly before they disappeared again.

100 years later the people wanted the inside of the church to be lighter and put two windows in each wall. Of course nobody knew that by doing this they were destroying ^{those} the then invisible wall paintings. On the occasion of a restoration 100 years ago the series of paintings were rediscovered and exposed. A painter ~~from~~ Muttentz traced the pictures before ^{they were} painting ~~ing~~ ²⁰ them over for a second time. Apart from the depiction of the Last Judgement on the western side everything disappeared under a coating of neutral white. The picture on the western wall was painted over by this painter exactly according to the model which had appeared. But now it has the character of the 17th century

The artist ~~is~~ - you know him already, traced ...

The latest restorations in the seventies exposed the wall paintings once more. This time they weren't covered again - they are looked upon in a different way, ^{now} everyone is proud of them. ^{in Muttentz} ^{everybody}

Now they are estimated as an impressive document of the early art as well.

The series of pictures ^{begins} on the southern wall - in the east. The top row shows the story of Mary, the Mother of ^{Jesus} God. The story of Mary merges into the story of Christ. The last picture in the top row shows the birth of Christ in the stable of Bethlehem.

The second row shows the childhood and youth of Christ and ends with his baptism in the Jordan River.

Time is running out, so I won't explain every single picture. But if you want to know more about the painted program, you can ask me later. On a broad field below the two rows, the death of Mary can be seen.

Christ's story continues on the northern wall, but here only the account of the Passion is depicted. The series continues on the top row - this time in the east - with Christ's arrival in Jerusalem.

Now the different stages of Christ's sufferings and death follow. A broad picture field can also be found on this side under the series of pictures. This depiction probably showed the three Marys at the grave.

In the niche you can see the Resurrection of Christ. It is likely that a three-dimensional ^{sculpture} ~~picture~~ of Christ's ^{grave} ~~grave~~ stood here.

On the southern wall you can make out the contours of 10 small pictures. ^{They had illustrated the 10 commandments} At that time the motif of the Ten Commandments was widespread ^{especially} on prints. Before you went to confession you could bring to mind which commandment you had broken.

Further you can see on all 3 walls the row of the 12 apostles lead by Christ. The words "SALVATOR MUNDI" are written above his head. This means Saviour of the World. Each apostle is marked by his name and attribute. In addition you can find a sentence from the Creed near every apostle. One ^{Confession} ~~profession~~ presumed in the past that the apostles formulated the profession of faith, that each of them added a sentence.

I already mentioned the depiction of the Last Judgement on the western wall: on Doomsday Christ sits and pronounces judgement upon the world. The just, righteous people are led into paradise and the damned are pushed and dragged into hell.

The jaws of an enormous monster form the entrance to hell. In every medieval church the Last Judgement is present in some way or other. The thought of death, damnation or redemption influenced the people's vital consciousness in a totally different way than it does today. (The belief in afterlife ruled their

thoughts and actions.)

Bearing this in mind you should also try to see the detailed depiction of the Passion. The people tried to comprehend the sufferings and death of Jesus in meditation, ^{to bear all the torments with the body,} ~~to get ready to be punished and~~ to be prepared for their own death. Here's a summary of the picture series: ^{live} the ~~story~~ of Mary and of Christ, the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Last Judgement, ^{which is meant as} ~~an~~ admonition. The most important points in the christian ^{confession} profession of faith are shown here in pictures to complete and illustrate the spoken word of the church service.

The ring wall:

In the Middle Ages many churches were surrounded by a ring wall. ^{But} MuttENZ is the only village in Switzerland whose ring wall has been preserved. ^{town}

The wall was built around 1440 by a member of the previously mentioned Münch family. The times were very troubled and the nobility was at war with one another. But it also was the time of the Council of Basle. The council sat for 17 years in ~~Basle~~ ^{in the nearby city town}. In my opinion the imposing defence system in front of the city ^{the main entrance} may not only be interpreted as existing for protection but surely also as an architectural monument of the proud nobility.

Luckily the wall never had to be used for defence, no "battle of MuttENZ" exists. Until 1860 a graveyard was situated inside the walls. ^{Then MuttENZ got a new bigger one} This is when the people wanted to break down the wall. Their main argument was ^{that} ^{service} attending church would be healthier - an argument that only is understandable if one considers that ^{people went to church more often than nowadays and that there was} ~~they had~~ no heating at that time and that being near graves was regarded as unhealthy. But an art historian from Zurich could prevent the demolition of the wall.

Now I'd like to show you the earlier charnel-house.

On the outer wall you can see St. Christopher, over the door the outlines of archangel Michael and over the window Mary, who protects everyone in need of shelter under her coat.

It became a custom in the 13/14th century to keep the bones which were found when clearing graves in a special, sacred place. This sometimes was a simple wooden shed or sometimes a chapel which had been built for this reason. It was possible to hold a service in the chapel, and occasionally processions would pass through it. The visibly piled up bones reminded them of the *vanity* (transitoriness) of earthly existence.

The charnel-house chapel of Muttentz was built in the second part of the 15th century. It served its function only for a short time because the Reformation abolished such cult of the dead. The wall paintings - with the date 1513 - show motifs in connection with death. Once again you can see the depiction of *the last judgement* Doomsday. The composition corresponds exactly to the one in the church. Christ is sitting *in judgement* in the middle. Mary and John the Baptist are pleading for those who are going to be condemned. On Christ's right the blessed are being led into paradise, on his left the damned are thrown into hell by evil devils. Among the damned are high secular and ecclesiastical dignitaries: a king or emperor, a pope, a bishop and a monk.

The painting on *the* this side shows a legend. Here the people are asked to pray for the dead. Also this legend, which was widespread in Europe, makes it clear how strongly the thought of death influenced and marked the vital consciousness of the people.

The St. Arbogast Church not only is a art monument but also vividly illustrates and helps us understand the piousness and *spirituality* ~~intellectuality~~ of the ~~Pre-Reformation~~ *Middle Ages*.