

The Heritage of the Nazarene Tradition in Slovakia in the Second Half of the 19th Century (J. B. Klemens and K. Švestka)

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Abstract

BEŇOVÁ, Katarína: The Heritage of the Nazarene tradition in Slovakia during the 2nd half of the 19th Century (J. B. Klemens and K. Švestka)

During the second half of the 19th century sacral painting increased in the area of the Upper Hungary (now Slovakia). By this time the main reason was quite productive rise of building of a new churches or renovation of the former ones. In this territory it was mostly the activity of the specialist for the sacral art, who under the conductorship of their donors and submitters influenced it. One of them was a member of the Franciscan order and painter Konrád Švestka (Schwestka, 1833 – 1907), active mainly during the second half of the 19th century. He worked namely the Salvatorian province as a sculptor, church interior designer, restorer and renovator. The second important personality in sacral painting was the painter, geologist and scientist, Slovak patriot Jozef Božetech Klemens (1817 – 1883) who primarily operated in the area of today's Slovakia. In a relation to their generation, Švestka and Klemens seem as a completion of one stage of development. In contrast to the votaries of Modernism (for example the Beuron Art School), artists of sacral-historical compositions (such as Mihály Munkácsy), by practice, realization and ways of thinking, they were evidently tied to the older tradition of modern times. Their art and renovations were the service to God, and reflected the tastes of the ones that commissioned them, where the Nazarene tradition belonged to frequently used.

Keywords: sacral painting, Jozef Božetech Klemens, Konrád Švestka, Nazarenes

In the second half of the 19th century there was an increase in religious painting in Upper Hungary (now Slovakia). The main reason was a surge in the construction of quite productive rise of building of a new churches and renovations of old ones. Most of this work was done by specialists in religious art working under the direction of donors and clients. One such figure was artist Konrád Švestka (Schwestka, 1833 – 1907),¹ a member of the Franciscan order who was active in the second half of the 19th century. He worked mainly in the Salvatorian province as a sculptor, interior designer, restorer and renovator. Another important figure for religious painting was Slovak patriot Jozef Božetech Klemens (1817 – 1883),² a painter, geologist and scientist who primarily worked on the territory of what is now Slovakia. Both of these artists were familiar with the Nazarene movement and their work was also influenced by the older tradition of baroque religious art and particularly that produced in eastern Slovakia.³

¹ BEŇOVÁ, Katarína. Akvizície zbierok starého umenia. Zbierka umenia 19. storočia. In: *Ročenka SNG*, Bratislava : SNG 2009, p. 114-129; BEŇOVÁ, Katarína. Konrád Švestka – pictor, sculptor, inaurator arcularum. Profil osobnosti maliara františkánskych kostolov na základe zachovaných diel z umelcovej pozostalosti v zbierke Slovenskej národnej galérie. In: *Ročenka SNG. Galéria 2012*. Bratislava : SNG 2012, 45-54; BEŇOVÁ, Katarína – CHMELINOVÁ, Katarína (eds.). *Pamiatky františkánskeho rádu na Slovensku v 19. storočí a Konrád Švestka*. Martin : Matica Slovenská 2013.

² KÁLMAN, Július. Jozef Božetech Klemens. In: *Sborník Matice slovenskej*, XX, No. 1-2, 1942, p. 40-84.

³ CHMELINOVÁ, Katarína. *Miesto zázrakov. Premeny barokového oltára*, Bratislava : SNG 2005; CHMELINOVÁ, Katarína. *Ars inter Arma. Umenie a kultúra ranéh novoveku na východním Slovensku*, Bratislava : SNG 2008.



1 Josef von Führich, Holy Family, around 1850, Oil on canvas (Galéria mesta Bratislavy, Bratislava)

These two artists focused on the area of Upper Hungary, which in the second half of the 19th century had strong ties to the Empire's capital, Vienna, and also, eventually, to Budapest, when it gained increased importance after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867.⁴ This was a period when parts of the Empire were gradually rediscovering their national roots and religious art became an important tool for the development of national identity. For the area of Upper Hungary this involved the use of artistic references to "national" saints like St. Stephen King, St. Ladislaus or St. Elisabeth of Hungary,⁵ or Ss. Cyril and Methodius.⁶ In the 19th century, the latter two saints were associated with

⁴ SZABOLCSI, Hedvig – GALAVICS, Géza. *Művészet Magyarországon 1780 – 1830*. Budapest : MTA Művészettörténeti Kutató Csoport 1980 – mainly the text: FRANKL SZÉPHELYI, György. *Vallásos festészet*. p. 79-93; SZABÓ, Júlia – FRANKL SZÉPHELYI, György (eds.). *Művészet Magyarországon 1830-1870*. Budapest : MTA Művészettörténeti Kutató Csoport. 1981. For the Czech area; FILIP, Aleš – MUSIL, Roman (eds.). *Neklidem k Bohu : Náboženské výtvarné umění v Čechách a na Moravě v letech 1870 – 1914*. Praha : Arbor vitae 2006; SCHENKOVÁ, Marie – OLŠOVSKÝ, Jaromír. *Malířství a sochařství 19. století v západní části českého Slezska*. Opava : Slezské zemské muzeum 2008; for Austria: SAROLTA, Dietrich – HÜLMBAUER, Elisabeth. *Gott erhalte Österreich. Religion und Staat in der Kunst des 19. Jahrhundert*. Eisenstadt : Amt der Burgenländischen Landesregierung 1990.

⁵ KERNY, Terézia. Vajk (István) trónokos megkeresztelése. Történeti és ikonográfiai adalékok Heszl János Mihály esztergomi főoltárképéhez. In: SZENTESI, Edit – MENTÉNYI, Klára – SIMON, Anna (eds.). *Kő kövön. Dávid Ferenc 73. születésnapjára / Stein auf Stein. Festschrift für Ferenc Dávid*. I-II. Budapest : Vince Kiadó 2013, p. 503-516.

efforts to mark the thousand-year anniversary of their arrival in the region of Upper Hungary/Slovakia, and also the anniversary of their death, and as a result the number of altar paintings featuring these saints grew. All this was also very important for the Slavic political awakening.

The main figures in the late Nazarenes movement in Vienna were Josef von Führich (1800 – 1876) and Leopold Kupelwieser (1796 – 1862).⁷ Both were active also in the Hungarian part of the Monarchy. From the 1840s, Führich and Kupelwieser, both living in Vienna, were considered a great influence on religious painting. For example, in 1844 – 1846, Führich completed a large cycle of the



2 Johann Scheffer von Leonhardshoff, St. Catherine, around 1822, Oil on canvas (Slovenské národné múzeum – Múzeum Bojnice), Image: Digitálne múzeum

Stations of the Cross for the Church of St. John Nepomuk in Vienna.⁸ His work was also attracting considerable attention in the Hungarian part of the Monarchy, especially owing to the wider distribution of his paintings as prints. Kupelwieser⁹ was much more active in Hungary than Führich and there created such works as the *Assumption of the Virgin Mary*, an altarpiece in the monastery church in Pécs, which he did in 1851, and the altarpieces for the cathedral in Kalocsa and, before that, in the 1830s, for the parish church in Józsefváros in Budapest. Other Nazarene paintings that can be found in Slovak galleries or museums include works by Führich (*Holy Family*, circa 1850, fig. 1), Overbeck, or Johann Scheffer von Leonardshoff (*St. Catherine*, fig. 2).¹⁰ Fürich and Kupelwieser also had a strong influence on religious painting because they both taught at the Vienna Academy. One of their students, a representative of Hungarian historical painting,

⁶ BEŇOVÁ, Katarína. Cyril a Metod vo výtvarnom umení 19. storočia na Slovensku. In: VOJTECH, Miloslav – PEKAROVIČOVÁ, Jana (eds.). *Studia Academica Slovaca. 42. Prednášky XLIX. letnej školy slovenského jazyka a kultúry*, Bratislava : Univerzita Komenského 2013, p. 38-58.

⁷ MACHALÍKOVÁ, Pavla – TOMÁŠEK, Petr (eds.). *Josef von Führich (1800 – 1879). Z Chrastavy do Vídně*. Praha : Narodní Galerie 2014; GREWE, Gordula. *Painting the Sacred in the Age of Romanticism*. Farnham Surrey : Ashgate Publishing, Ltd. 2009; GALLWITZ, Klaus (ed.). *Die Nazarener*. Frankfurt am Mainz : Städel Museum 1977.

⁸ REITER, Cornelia. Die Kartons zu den Kreuzwegstationen in der Johann-Nepomuk-Kirche in Wien. In: SCHRÖDER, Klaus Albert – REITER, Cornelia (eds.). *Josef Führich*. Wien : C. Brandstätter 2005, p. 50-80.

⁹ RITTINGER, Bernard. *Kupelwieser in Kirchen Wiens. Ein Führer zu den Malereien Leopold Kupelwiesers in und für Kirchen und Kapellen Wiens sowie zu deren künstlerischer Entstehung; aus Anlaß des 200. Geburtstages des Künstlers*. Wien : Erzbischöfliches Dom- und Diözesanmuseum 1996.

¹⁰ Josef von Führich: *The Holy Family*, c. 1850, Property of the Municipal Gallery in Bratislava (GMB, inv. no. A 210); After Leopold Kupelwieser: *Immaculate Conception of the Holy Virgin*, around 1850 (GMB, inv. no. A 887); *Immaculate Conception of the Holy Virgin*, c. 1850 (GMB, inv. no. A 895); Johann Scheffer von Leonardshoff: *St. Catherine*, c. 1822, Property of the Museum Bojnice, Slovak National museum (SNM MB, inv. no. XI-0960).

Bertalan Székely, (1835 – 1910) recalled in his memories: “Führich’s opinion was that the whole purpose of art is to celebrate religion.”¹¹

It was the work of Friedrich Overbeck and Josef Führich that garnered the most attention. Print reproductions of paintings also helped to spread the work of Nazarene painters quickly beyond the confines of Rome and beyond the German-speaking countries when they later resided there. In 1824, reproductions of pictures by Overbeck and Philipp Veit began to be published by the renowned publishing house of Johann Velten in Karlsruhe. Gradually, other publishing houses joined in, most of them in Germany.¹² When photography emerged as a new medium in the 19th century the photography it was used also to create photographic reproductions of works by the Nazarenes in addition to the prints. Through publishing of illustrated books, their woodcuts reached other artists and the general public through the publication and distribution of illustrated books. Some of these reproductions were found among the materials in Švestka’s estate, and Klemens was also familiar with them.

While in Vienna the construction of the Votive Church was one of the most important projects in religious art and architecture, after 1850 Esztergom Cathedral became the most interesting church commission in Hungary, and was ultimately the most important Hungarian project of the entire 19th century. The main altar was commissioned by Archbishop Alexander Rudnay from a painter in Vienna – Eger native Johann Michael Hess (Hesz, 1768 – 1836), who created a work with the theme *Baptism of Vajk* (made in 1828).¹³ Archbishop János Kopácsy decided to change the interior décor and in 1845 he commissioned the Venetian painter Michelangelo Grigoletti¹⁴ (1801 – 1870) to complete the altarpiece for Esztergom Cathedral.¹⁵ (Fig. 3) Grigoletti was recommended for this work by the Bishop of Eger, János László Pyrker, who, as a patriarch of Venice, had good contacts in Italy.



3 Michelangelo Grigoletti, Assumption, 1845, Oil on canvas, Basilica, Esztergom, Hungary Image: author’s archive

¹¹ SZÉPHELYI, 1981, p. 85.

¹² GALLWITZ, 1977, p. 380-382.

¹³ JÁVOR, Anna. Hesz János Mihály (1768 – 1836) művészeti hagyatéka. In: *Művészettörténeti Értesítő*, No. 3-4, 1991, p. 214-220.

¹⁴ This subject will be elaborated further in 2015 as part of work on the author’s grant project: Vega no. 1/0397/13, *Interakcie medzi umeleckou kultúrou Itálie a vývinom umenia na Slovensku v 19. storočí*.

¹⁵ MOJZER, Miklós. Tanulmányok a Keresztény múzeumban. In: *Művészettörténeti értesítő*, XIII., no. 3, 1964, p. 214-226; SISA, József. *A magyar klasszicizmus*. Budapest : Corvina Kiadó KFT 2006, p. 47-50.

Evidence of the preferences that related to religious art is found in a letter from Provost Michal Haas (1810 – 1866) in 1852 to his colleague Ján Danielik (1817 – 1888).¹⁶ The letter mentions the general criteria of a religious work of art, and next to moral values it most of all highlights beauty and simplicity. The historicist style, which began to appear in the visual art of the Roman Catholic Church in the 1830s and 1840s, was one of the most preferred styles.

Jozef Božetech Klemens

The artistic career of painter Jozef Božetech Klemens started in Prague, where he was active among supporters of the National Revival. He worked as a drawing teacher for the families of figures in the Czech national movement, and also worked for the school of Dr. Karol Slavoj Amerling called Budeč. In (presenting) his works Klemens always sought to cultivate the taste of believers in the church. In one of his letters he wrote about the role of artists in the relationship to God and thought it the purpose of fine art to present the ideas of the Catholic Church.¹⁷

In the 1850s, after Klemens return to Slovakia from Prague, he began to work intensively on painting altarpieces. Klemens' art is primarily found in the area around Žilina and Banská Bystrica, but it also reached other regions. Although he wasn't solely a church painter [he did not just paint religious art], he had a very deep relationship with God. In a letter to his friend and supporter Dr. Karol Slavoj Amerling in Prague in 1880, he wrote: "*The beneficial enforcer of all things holy! Every painterly work was preceded by a prayer for the gifts and enlightenment from above in order to execute a work that should be ennobling in the temple of congregated listeners...*"¹⁸

In 1837 Klemens began studying at the Academy of Fine Art in Prague, where he encountered the work of František Tkadlík, Josef Hellich,¹⁹ Christian Ruben and Josef Navrátil. We know of examples of his designs for churches in Tvrdošín, Žilina or Nové Mesto nad Váhom and Sučany. Klemens followed a system in his work where he first created a thoroughly refined drawing, then apportioned it into a grid, and then transferred it to canvas. He used drapery to accentuate the clothing of the male and female saints in his paintings and drew special attention to a figure's face and hands. His figures seem noble, and have a natural humility. Consistent with the practices of the Nazarenes and traditional academic education, he designed his figures anatomically, and he only then "arranged" the clothing on the figures. Examples of this approach are the drawing *St. Martin with a Beggar*²⁰ from 1878, which he created for the church in Dlhé Pole (Fig. 4), or a drawing he created for the church in Raková. (Fig. 5)

¹⁶ SZÉPHELYI, 1981, p. 80.

¹⁷ KÁLMAN, Július. *Umelecké prostredie Jozefa B. Klemensa a Petra Bohúňa*. Bratislava : Osvetové ústredie pri Ministerstve školstva a národnej osvety 1943, p. 19.

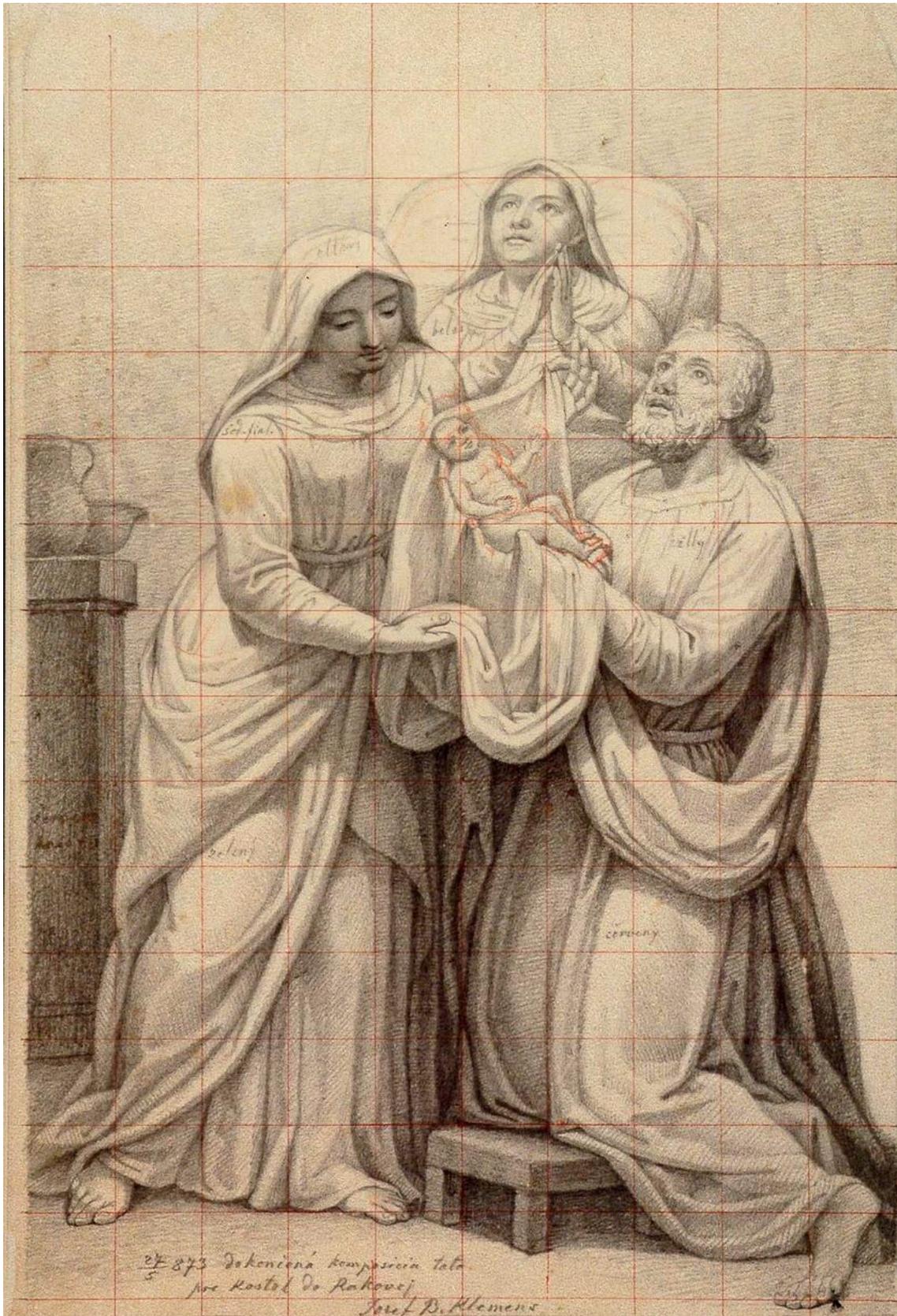
¹⁸ KÁLMAN, 1943, p. 59: A letter dated 16 September 1880.

¹⁹ PETROVÁ, Eva. *František Tkadlík*. Praha : Československá akademie věd 1960; HOJDA, Zdeněk – PRAHL, Roman. Josef Hellich a (spolek) křesťanské(ho) umění. In: HOJDA, Zdeněk – PRAHL, Roman. *Bůh a bohové. Církev, náboženství a spiritualita v českém 19. století*. Praha : KLP-Koniasch Latin Press 2003, p. 303.

²⁰ Jozef Božetech Klemens. *St. Martin with a Beggar*, 1878, LM SNM, inv. no. 2895; also see *St. Nicolaus*, 1878, LM SNM, inv. č. Ex 988.



4 Jozef Božetech Klemens, St. Martin Bishop, 1878, Drawing, paper, for Church in Dlhé Pole (Slovenské literárne múzeum, Martin)



5 Jozef Božetech Klemens, Holy Family, 1873, Drawing, paper for the Church in Raková (Slovenské literárne múzeum, Martin)

In 1856 Klemens was appointed as a teacher of technical subjects at the grammar school in Žilina. While there he created many altar paintings for churches in Žilina and the surrounding area, works that reflect the taste of his customers but also “educated” them to the Nazarene example to be used as

the best form for religious art.²¹ There are around 58 known altarpieces that he either executed or designed. In addition to conducting scientific experiments and cooperating with the Institute of Geology in Vienna, he mainly worked as a secondary-school teacher. In 1863, after the school in Žilina was closed, he applied to for work in Banská Bystrica, where he became a teacher of drawing and natural sciences. One of Klemens' first and most important works was for the Church of St. George in Veľký Bobrovec²² near Liptovský Mikuláš, where he worked on a commission from the vicar, Peter Árvay, who had the church painted at his own expense. In 1855, he worked for the village Palúdzka during the construction of the Chapel of St. John Nepomuk and he created an altarpiece for (a church in) Vadičov and (for churches in) other villages.

In the early 1860s Ss Cyril and Methodius became important motifs (religious painting/in Slovakia) in connection with celebrations marking a thousand years since their arrival in the region. While Klemens was working in Banská Bystrica, he got in touch with Michal Chrástek, a professor of theology, and bishop Štefan Moyzes,²³ who played an important role in these celebrations. He created several works featuring Ss Cyril and Methodius²⁴ for places like Mojtn (1858), Dohňany (1863), Detva, Žilina, or Párovce (1876). A reference to this motif can also be found in a letter Klemens wrote to Professor Hattala in Prague.²⁵

Klemens' strong faith as an artist manifested itself in his approach to religious themes, where he tried to find the most traditional form of expression. Many of Klemens' works show why he was one of the most sought-after artists in this genre and he produced one of the largest bodies of work among artists active in Slovakia. In some examples, the lessons he drew from the work of Josef Führich are visible; this is most apparent in his Stations of the Cross cycles. For instance, the Stations of the Cross he created for the church in Pružina in 1863 have survived to the present day, albeit they are somewhat incomplete. Other lessons from the Nazarene tradition can be observed in the use of clear colours, and of local colours; which is apparent in the Parish Church of the Holy Trinity in Žilina, where Klemens applied a complex iconographic programme in the interior decorations. This building had been damaged by an earthquake and on 27 August 1868 Klemens created a design for the altarpiece depicting the Holy Trinity for this church. Scenes of the Crucifixion are painted in the side altars and scenes of the Immaculate Conception painted in the form of pendants adorn the altarpiece for which we know of several preparatory drawings, in which Klemens traditionally modelled his work on that of the old masters. The main altar reflects the theme of the Holy Trinity. These motives can be also found in his later commissions (for example in Bziny, Horný Vadičov, Kolárovice or Mojtn).

As mentioned above, the drawing played an important role for artists and helped them to prepare the initial setting of the theme selected for an altar painting. In the archives of the Slovak National

²¹ KÁLMAN, 1943, p. 46.

²² Ibidem, p. 57; also see KRČMÉRY, Štefan. Umelecký Život. Jozef Božetech Klemens (1817 – 1883). In: *Slovenské pohľady*, XLI, 1925, p. 486.

²³ VAJANSKÝ, Svetozár Hurban. *Storočná pamiatka narodenia Štefana Moysesosa*. Turčiansky sv. Martin : Knihkupecko-nakladateľský spolok 1897, p. 98-99; BEŇOVÁ, 2013, p. 28-29.

²⁴ Ibidem, p. 29-30.

²⁵ Památník národného písennictví – Archive, letter from J. B. Klemens to Prof. Martin Hatalla, 1862, Prague.

Library in Martin, there is a document written in the handwriting of Klemens' son Jozef, who drew up a list of all of his father's works. Although there are about 50 locations where it is possible to find Klemens work, from this document we know that there must have been many more commissions.

Klemens like Švestka worked not only as painter but also an author of interior decoration. There exists a drawing for the whole set of altar architecture for the church in Žilina that provides a nice example of Klemens great range not only as a painter but also as interior designer. In the 1870s Klemens created several preparatory drawings with the motif of Our Lady of the Rosary. (Fig. 6) He produced a similar composition for the church in Raková and also for the church in Turzovka, with medallions inspired by popular compositions he created based on the old masters. A similar thread can be traced in the work of Konrad Švestka.



6 Jozef Božetech Klemens, Our Lady of a Rosary, 1870s, Oil on canvas, Church in Tvrdošín Image: author's archive

Konrád Švestka

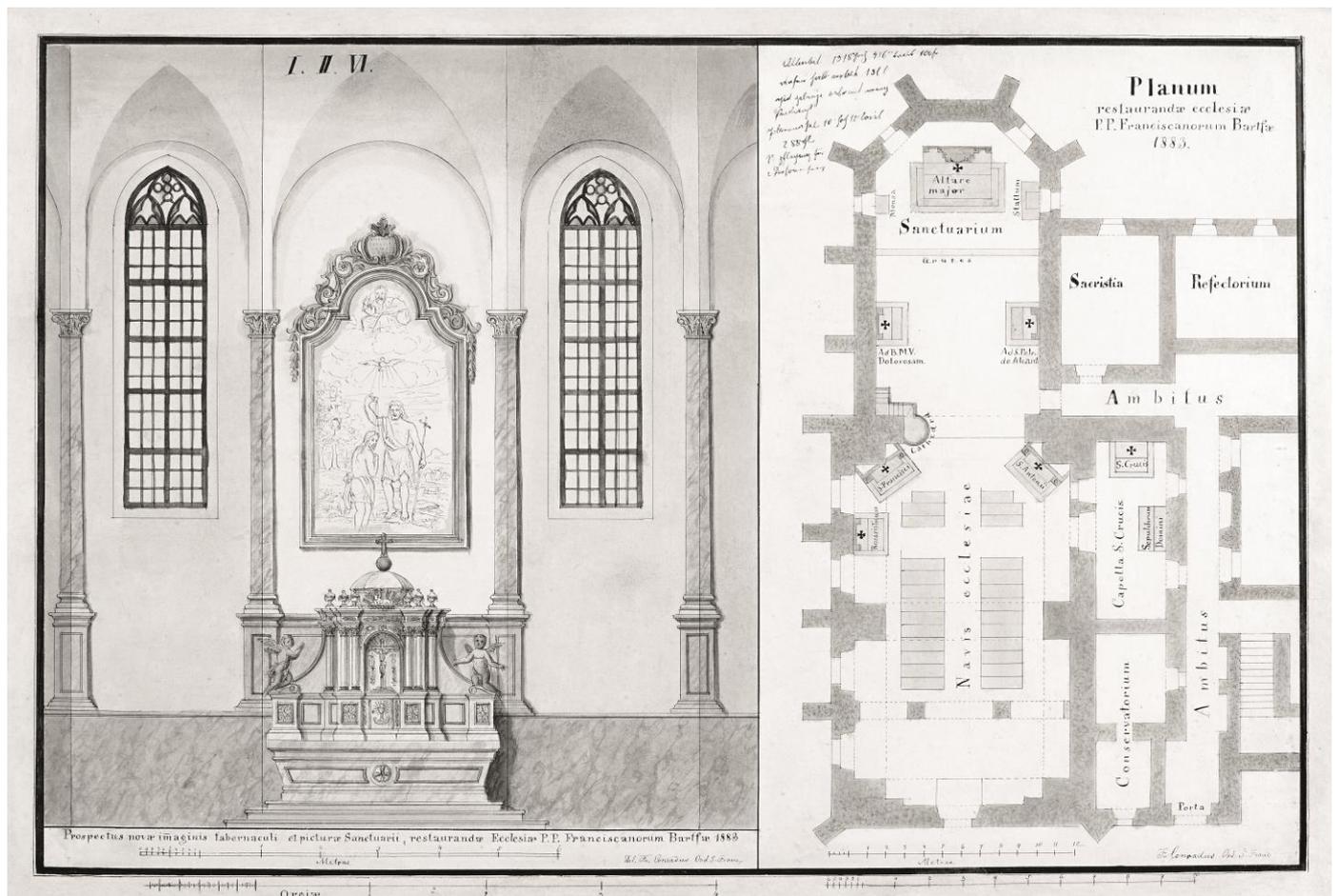
This brings us to the second artist of interest here, Konrád Švestka.²⁶ He was an all-round church artist and a great example of a monastic artist, but one on whom we still have little information. His work included creating designs for altars, furniture, the interiors of churches, sculptures, architecture, restoration and to some extent even heritage preservation. The artist's key works were made for the Franciscan monasteries in Hlohovec, Skalica, Prešov, and Bardejov in Slovakia, but also for sites in Ukraine (Uzhorod), and the work he did later for the town of Žilina and its surrounding area is the most important in his oeuvre. With its focus on spiritual development, the monastery environment itself offers the necessary space and time for a person with artistic tendencies to come into his own. Švestka entered the Franciscan order on 6 February 1852, which means at the beginning of his great prosperity, in which he undoubtedly took a significant part. Švestka worked mostly in the environment of the Franciscan order and specifically of the Salvatorian province. He did important renovation work and several comprehensive restorations of entire church interiors. His thinking in this area may have been influenced by the Conclusions of the Czech Provincial Synod in, the fifth section of which was dedicated to the preservation and renewal of churches and was a precursor to the foundation of heritage conservation.²⁷

²⁶ BEŇOVÁ – CHMELINOVÁ, 2013.

²⁷ FILIP – MUSIL, 2006, p. 53.

Not much information has yet been obtained on his art education. Research has discovered that his name was not listed in the school records of any of the nearby academies in Vienna, Munich²⁸ or Prague.²⁹ In 1866, Švestka was registered in Hlohovec as a lay brother. He created three new Neo-Gothic altars for the temple (of St. Teresa of Avila, 1869; of the Holy Family, 1871 and of the Holy Heart, early 1870's), a set of paintings, and a monumental ceiling decoration of the church nave. Hlohovec was the main basis for his work up to the end of the 19th century.

Švestka's good observational talent, knowledge of works of international art, from which he drew individual motifs, and above all his continuous study of art and history contributed to the development of his artistic style. The scale of his work (around 46 locations)³⁰ and above all the qualitative differences in his oeuvre suggest he may have been employed in a workshop, where carpenters, carvers and helpers worked under his direction. The work of the Nazarenes and often in particular Josef Führich was a decisive inspiration for him. He typically combined a Renaissance style with vegetation motifs (for example, in the altarpiece of St. Barbara for the Church of St. Barbara in Žilina).



7 Konrád Švestka, Sketch for the interior of the Franciscan Church in Bardejov, 1883, Drawing, paper, (Slovenská národná galéria, Bratislava)

²⁸ Archives of Fine Arts, Slovenská národná galéria, f. of Dr. Mária Mariani. In July 1965 painter Mikuláš Jordán mentioned, that Švestka studied in München. – BOŘUTOVÁ, Dana - BEŇOVÁ, Katarína. *Mníchovská akadémia a Slovensko*, Bratislava : Stimul 2009.

²⁹ BEŇOVÁ, 2012.

³⁰ BEŇOVÁ – CHMELINOVÁ, 2013, p. 64-183.

Švestka based his work on a number of print reproductions (of paintings/works by the Nazarenes) that were very popular in Upper Hungary. The Nazarene approach to depicting religious themes tended to be favoured among clients commissioning work and was less contentious. The Nazarenes' linear compositions and motifs, inspired by the established form used to represent male and female saints, were also much sought after in the second half of the 19th century. Švestka was also very familiar with the salon painting of the last third of the 19th century (Munkácsy, Max etc.).

Švestka worked in the traditional way of painting, based on a firm but soft drawing whose composition adhered to one of the standard arrangement techniques. The drawings by him that have survived provide evidence of the careful preparations he undertook before making an altarpiece. This approach, taught to artists students at an art academy, helped the artist to clarify the construction of the work. Like the Nazarene painters, Švestka also mostly used a bright palette of colours in his paintings, where the symbolism of the colours corresponds to their specification for example at the figures of saints. He followed the rule that every colour has to develop from a darker to a lighter shade. According to Nazarene teaching this method of brightening could support the visual meditation of the worshippers. At the same time, he tried to reflect the demands of his clients. If he painted a painting to replace an original piece, oftentimes because it had been destroyed, he tried to base the new work on the original as faithfully as possible. We can see some examples of his work in Bardejov (fig. 7) or Prešov. Surviving works include a design for the final construction work on a sanctuary and an altar for a Franciscan church in Prešov made in 1871. Švestka's designs relate to the first renovation of the altar. He followed the design of the original altar from 1732 made by the painter František Strecius. In 1872, Švestka created an illusionary painting of the main altar's architecture with a central painting depicting the Holy Family. Here, Švestka describes individual parts of the architecture and the altar painting in details. This illusive architecture is one of few works of the 19th century that were preserved in our territory.

Another set of works by Švestka from the 1880s is linked to the Franciscan church and monastery in Bardejov. The Church of St. John burnt down on Easter Monday in 1878 but was rebuilt shortly after, in 1881 – 1882, and began to be used again. New works of art were added to the Neo-Gothic interior by a number of artists, including Konrád Švestka. A detailed drawing by Švestka and the final bill for the works are stored in the archives of the Slovak National Library in Martin. The final accounting includes the renovation of the interior decorations of the Franciscan church in Bardejov – painting, sculpturing, gilding and joinery work that cost 1.160 guildens in total.³¹ When working on the altar paintings in 1890, he used the same composition for the Holy Family as he had done in Prešov.

As for his works from 1895 and 1899 that have been preserved, there are drawings of designs for buildings in the town of Banská Bystrica, probably the almshouse Church of St. Elisabeth, which was restored by Franz Storno.³² Švestka drew a plan of the interior, including an illusionary Neo-Gothic Romantic style of altar. In this period he also designed two complex decorations of church interiors. For the first church, the Church of St. Gall in Predmier, he designed three Neo-Gothic altars, the main

³¹ BEŇOVÁ – CHMELINOVÁ, 2013, p. 68-74.

³² BURAN, Dušan (ed.). *Reštaurátor Franz Storno starší (1821 – 1907)*. Bratislava : SNG 2008.



9 Konrád Švestka, Illusive painting, 1872, Franciscan Church in Prešov Image: author's archive

one and two side ones in 1898. The second masterpiece was created for the parish church in Bytčica, run by the Franciscans of Žilina. He designed the complete renovation of the main altar and the ceiling decorations of the church's nave, which were inspired by prints by Francesco Bartolozzi based on a fresco by Giustino Menescardi.

It is from the early 20th century that two portraits of famous personalities, Ctibor of Ctiborice and Mathew Csák of Trencsén, date. And it was probably in this period that he restored the last signed canvas of F. A. Maulbertsch depicting the Stigmatisation of St. Francis on the main altar of the Franciscan church in Kremnica, where he was living at the time.

Conclusion

In relation to their generation, Švestka and Klemens seem to represent the culmination of one stage of development. Unlike the proponents of Modernism (such as the members of the Beuron Art School, with their leaning towards avant-garde forms), artists of religious-historical compositions (such as Mihály Munkácsy), there were in their technique, work, and ways of thinking were evidently tied to the older tradition of modern times. The art of Klemens and Švestka and renovations were the service to God, and reflected the tastes of the ones that commissioned them, where the Nazarene tradition belonged to frequently used.

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