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Priests, Artists and Heretics, or Meetings of the Resurrectionists with Wojciech Korneli Stattler and Adam Mickiewicz in Rome and Paris

Sacerdoti, artisti ed eretici, ovvero gli incontri dei Resurrezionisti con Wojciech Korneli Stattler e Adam Mickiewicz a Roma e a Parigi

L'articolo esamina diversi atteggiamenti ideologici tra la Grande Emigrazione, rappresentata da una cerchia di amici di Adam Mickiewicz, il pittore Wojciech Korneli Stattler, e la Congregazione dei Resurrezionisti, in particolare Padre Hieronim Kajsiewicz e Padre Piotr Semenenko. Il punto di partenza per la discussione degli atteggiamenti è un dipinto scoperto durante l'inventario e la documentazione della collezione d'arte dell'Ordine dei Resurrezionisti a Roma, che raffigura il Battesimo di Cristo nel fiume Giordano, dove il viso di Giovanni Battista ha i tratti di Adam Mickiewicz. Il dipinto è stato attribuito a Stattler, sulla base di un'analisi dell'opera e rintracciando i legami del pittore con lo stesso Mickiewicz. Questa rappresentazione del battesimo di Cristo è legata al messianismo di Mickiewicz e, in seguito, anche al Towianismo e al suo impatto sull'emigrazione. Su questo sfondo vengono mostrati gli atteggiamenti dei Resurrezionisti, che erano coinvolti nella lotta contro il Towianismo. Tuttavia, non hanno mai rinunciato a cercare di 'reclamare' il poeta per la causa polacca e hanno mantenuto vivo il ricordo del poeta.

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Parole chiave: Wojciech Korneli Stattler, Adam Mickiewicz, Ordine dei Resurrezionisti, Battesimo di Cristo, towianesimo, messianismo, pittura.

Słowa kluczowe: Wojciech Korneli Stattler, Adam Mickiewicz, zakon zmartwychwstańców, chrzest Chrystusa, towianizm, mesjanizm, malarstwo.

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In the Roman General House of the Congregation of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ there is a thought-provoking painting of *The Christ's baptism in the Jordan* [fig. 1].¹ On first examination, the layout of this composition is in line with the well-known iconographic canon of this representation. It is a two-figure scene where Jesus (on the left), portrayed in profile, stands in a shallow river and bows his head, with his hands folded in a prayerful gesture, while John the Baptist, shown facing forward, standing in slight contrapposto on a rock, extends his right hand over the Savior's head, pouring water over it from a shell. Christ is dressed only in a white loincloth around his hips, while the Prophet is dressed in camel skin, exposing his chest and legs. Above them on the axis of the painting, there is a white dove, while the background shows landscape with outlined mountains on the horizon and a clustered pink-blue sky. The iconography of the scene and the manner of depicting the figures corresponds, therefore, with the centuries-old visual tradition of representing Christ's baptism in the Jordan River in European art.² The idealistic face of the Messiah, framed by long dark hair and beard, also correlates with it.

- 1 The work has not been the subject of any scientific publication. Its discovery was possible thanks to the research program of the POLONIKA Institute, which carries out the project Inventory and documentation of the painting, sculpture, crafts, and iconographic collection of the Resurrectionist Order in Italy. I would like to express my sincere thanks for the cooperation to Barbara and Piotr Jamski, and for the support of the project to Director D. Janiszewska-Jakubiak, research program manager Dr. Anna Rudek-Śmiechowska and Dr. Anna Wotlińska.
- 2 M. Biernacka, *Ikonoografia publicznej działalności Chrystusa w polskiej sztuce nowożytnej*, Warszawa 2003, p. 25–57.

1. Wojciech Korneli Stattler, *Christ's baptism in the Jordan*, oil on canvas, 124 × 99 cm, owned by the Congregation of the Resurrectionists. Photo P. Jamski.



What breaks from the canon of this visual convention, however, is the portrait depiction of the face of John the Baptist, a middle-aged man with distinctive features, half-length hair and a beard with sideburns, formed in accordance with the first-half 19th century fashion. Both St. John's facial features and his hair-style resemble the face known from portraits of... Adam Mickiewicz.

The resemblance between the image of John the Baptist and the Polish Romantic bard as well as the place of storage of the painting allows to assume that the author of *The Christ's Baptism in the Jordan* could have been any of the Polish painters active in the Eternal City in the first half of the 19th century. Among the artists from this circle, Wojciech Korneli Stattler made a pen sketch illustrating the Baptism of Christ [fig. 2] of almost identical composition as the oil piece from the Resurrectionist collection. Only the poses of the figures are slightly modified in the sketch – Christ holds his hands crossed on his chest, rather than crossed like in the painting, and his legs are positioned differently, while John the Baptist is shown frontally, with his legs turned the opposite way compared to the oil composition. Stattler's sketch was created, according to the inscription on the back, "November 25th, 1825 in Rome" and

According to the thought and will of Thorwaldsen / painting of St. John the Baptist for the Castle Church of the Cathedral. Crac. – which, however, I did not execute due to the fact that it had a bland resemblance to the bas-relief of this Danish artist.³

The study was modeled, with some modifications, on a simple composition of a scene from Bertel Thorvaldsen's bas-relief *The Baptism of Christ* located on the baptismal font, and was intended to be a sketch for a painting commissioned for St. John's Chapel, the so-called Chapel of Zadzik in the Cracow Cathedral.⁴ The commission was submitted to the young painter in 1824

3 M. Nitka, *Twórczość malarzy polskich w papieskim Rzymie w XIX wieku*, Warszawa 2014, pp. 148–149

4 *Künstlerleben in Rom. Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770–1844). Der dänische Bildhauer und seine deutschen Freunde*, ed. G. Bott, H. Spielmann, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, I XII 1991–I III 1992, Nürnberg 1991, pp. 559–561. See also: <https://arkivet.thorvaldsensmuseum.dk/articles/baptismal-font-to-brahetrolleborg-church> [DOA: 2.11.2023].

2. Wojciech Korneli Stattler, *Christ's baptism*, 1825, pencil on paper, 11,4 × 7,2 cm.
National Museum in Warsaw, inventory no. Rys. Pol. 5915. Fig. cit. per M. Nitka,
Twórczość malarzy polskich w papieskim Rzymie w XIX wieku, Warszawa 2014, fig. 18.



by Bishop Ludwik Łętowski, since the previous altar painting had been destroyed.⁵ The oil work based on this composition, however, was not created during Stattler's Roman sojourn, as indicated by the already cited signature on the sketch. The Bishop Zadzik's chapel, on the other hand, houses a different version of *The Christ's Baptism* by the Cracovian [fig. 3] which was placed there in 1836.⁶ This work presents a completely different structure than previous versions of this topic by Stattler. The key figure for the scene, the Messiah, is shown in a highly unusual way – from behind, slightly diagonally, so that the viewer “occupies” the place of the baptized. In front of Christ stands John the Baptist, shown straight ahead, with characteristic features and a sideburned hairstyle. The portrait-like nature of his physiognomy contrasts with the perfect faces of the three angels adjacent to him. St. John's face resembles that of Mickiewicz, as his contemporaries already observed. Franciszek Ksawery Prek wrote: “the recreation of Mickiewicz's features in St. John's face caused passionate discussions at the time [i.e., 1836 – MN].”⁷ Ambroży Grabowski, on the other hand, mentioned in his portfolios that Stattler:

pictured Christ kneeling by the river in an upturned posture, which many did not like and was the cause of sharp rebukes. When I myself pointed out to Mr. Stattler the inappropriate posture of the Savior, he said: I will prove to you that I have pictured Christ as he is now in relation to us, because considering our (political) position, should we not be convinced that indeed the Lord God has turned his face away from us? And in a way Mr. Stattler is very right.⁸

Thus, the question arises, where in these paintings showing a biblical story did the portrait of Mickiewicz come from? The answer may be provided by presenting the genesis of Stattler's work and, in light of this, the semantics of these works. It is also important to determine when and under what circumstances

5 Letter from Bishop L. Leczkowski to W. Stattler 7/06/1830 recalled by M. Masłowski, *Studia malarские Wojciecha Kornelego Stattlera. Kraków–Rzym, Wrocław 1964*, p. 99. The materials belonged to the painter's family collection.

6 M. Masłowski, *Studia malarские Wojciecha Kornelego Stattlera*, pp. 99–100.

7 F. K. Prek, *Czasy i ludzie*, Wrocław 1959, p. 267.

8 A. Grabowski, *Wspomnienia Ambrożego Grabowskiego*, vol. 2, Kraków 1909, pp. 176–177.

3. Wojciech Korneli Stattler, *Christ's baptism in the Jordan*, 1836, oil on canvas, Wawel Cathedral, Chapel of St. John the Baptist. Photo Wawel Cathedral.



the work found its way into the collection of the Resurrectionists, whether it is only a memento of acquaintance, or it relates to the ideological message of the order, being patrons of Polish art, involved in the formation of Mickiewicz in Paris and Rome. Taking these issues into consideration, it is necessary to begin with the most historically traceable part of the works, namely the genesis of the portrait of Mickiewicz. The bard's portrait was painted by Stattler in Rome at the turn of 1829 and 1830 [fig. 4], i.e., in the period before the establishment of the Resurrectionist Congregation. At that time, there was a meeting between the painter and the poet in the Eternal City, where the latter arrived in the company of Antoni Edward Odyniec on November 18th, 1829.⁹ The Cracovian guide them around Rome's monuments, galleries and art salons.¹⁰ The portrait of the poet was created in Stattler's studio. The painter reminisced years later:

with a bare neck, draped in an old navy-blue coat, sitting leaning and thoughtful, and always silent, he seemed to be a specimen of a loner locked in a cell, having terrible visions. This is how I painted him in the portrait.¹¹

This is how one of the first images of Mickiewicz was created, currently known only from a sketch (the completed painting was located at Prince Czartoryski's estate in Wiązownica and has not survived).¹² It shows the poet's bust en face, in a close frame, filling almost the entire composition. The bard's face is emphasized by flowing dark hair and sideburns, which accentuates his almond-shaped eyes looking directly at the viewer and characteristic fleshy lips. The physiognomy of the man in the portrait corresponds with the image from the Cracow's *Baptism of Christ*. However, in this work Stattler's desired not only

- 9 The meeting between A. Mickiewicz and W. K. Stattler in Rome was described in detail by A. Litwornia, *Rzym Mickiewicza. Poeta nad Tybrem 1829–1831*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 113–131.
- 10 A. E. Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 2, Warszawa 1961, pp. 31, 69, 116–117, 242–243, 415–419, 605–606.
- 11 W. K. Stattler, *Przypomnienie starych znajomości*, „Kłosy”, 17 (1873) no 432, p. 230.
- 12 This image is most likely shown in a photograph from the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw: DDWneg.4039, <https://cyfrowe.mnw.art.pl/pl/zbiory/82285>, [DOA: 10.12.2023]. The Museum, however, has a sketch by W. K. Stattler, *Portrait of Adam Mickiewicz*, 1830, pencil on paper, 14,4 × 10,4 cm., Rys. Pol. 5914.

4. Wojciech Korneli Stattler, *Mickiewicz's Portrait*, 1830, pencil on paper, 14,4 × 10,4 cm National Museum in Warsaw, Rys. Pol. 5914. Fig. cit. per W. Mickiewicz, *Żywot Adama Mickiewicza podług zebranych przez siebie materiałów oraz własnych wspomnień opowiedział...*, vol. 2, Poznań 1932, fig. 4.



*Adam Mickiewicz w r. 1830.
Portret W. Stattlera wykonany w Rzymie.*

to convey the physical resemblance, but the poet's personality. He recalled "seeing him with only his body sitting for the portrait [...] I woke him up with a look, and if that didn't help, I woke him up with a conversation."¹³ This is because a portrait according to Stattler was supposed to show the spiritual characteristics of the model.¹⁴ He wrote

[...] the facial expression is [...] a faithful representation of the soul, made by the hand of the Creator himself [...]. There is nothing more engaging to me than reading such an image of the soul, spilled throughout our form [...]. Our body [...] being submissive to the continuous action of the spirit, that is, our will, must accept the proper signs or expressions of these thoughts and deeds of ours.¹⁵

Stattler therefore tried to bring out in the portrait the thoughts of Mickiewicz, with which he became familiar with during the sessions when they exchanged views on art and its role in society. Years later, in his manuscript *Przypomnienia starych znajomości* [Reminders of Old Acquaintances], he recalled that it was then that the bard suggested to him the idea of painting the story of the Maccabees.¹⁶ The painter's version, however, could not be true, because he had shown a sketch of this painting to the poet in Rome, moreover, Stattler's contemporaries did not want to publish this fragment of the painter's narration in the pages of "Kłosa" ["Spikes"].¹⁷ Mickiewicz could only reveal to the painter his interpretation of the biblical passage. The axis of the finished depiction of the Maccabees by Stattler, after all, fidelity to God's mes-

13 W. K. Stattler, *Przypomnienie starych znajomości*, p. 230.

14 Stattler even formulated his own physiognomy rules; W. K. Stattler, *O piękności w sztukach pięknych przez Wojciecha Kornelego Stattlera profesora Malarstwa*, „Dziennik Literacki”, 13 (1865) no 61, pp. 487–488.

15 W. K. Stattler, *O piękności w sztukach pięknych*, pp. 487–488.

16 W. Stattler, *Przypomnienie starych znajomości*, na pamiątkę Klementynie z Zerbonych Stattler przez Wojciecha Kornelego Stattlera, ms. National Museum in Cracow, 510/6, Ni 83910.

17 A. Pochodaj, *Między Mickiewiczem a Słowackim – „Machabeusze” Wojciecha Kornelego Stattlera*, in: *Sztuka i obraz sztuki. Obrazowanie wizualne a literatura i filozofia*, ed. M. Kapustka, A. Pochodaj, Wrocław 1999, pp. 157–167.

sage and voluntary suffering as the foundation of future victory.¹⁸ Such a reading of the Old Testament history is in line with the historical philosophy of the author of *Dziady*, whose important stage of development and formulation took place in Rome. At that time, he joined the sacrament of confession after a long time (December 8th, 1830) and received a copy of Thomas à Kempis' *On the Imitation of Christ* from his confessor, Father Stanisław Chołoniewski.¹⁹ Mickiewicz was thus able to show Stattler the meaning of biblical history for the fate of Poland, whose history the Cracovian wanted to paint in Rome. In fact, Stattler desired not so much to paint anecdotes from his homeland's past, but to create true historical painting, showing historical truth.²⁰ He emphasized this, distinguishing between "painting", which merely "imitates in various colors the objects of Nature", and "imagery", i.e. "depicting thoughts", which is "the creation of Images inspired by the Poet, which, vividly before our eyes, makes us participants in the concepts of the master's works" [underlined by MN].²¹ In this metaphorical sense, Mickiewicz may have been for Stattler the creator of the Maccabees, that is, the one who, like the Prophet, showed the painter the mission of the Polish Nation.²²

Mickiewicz, however, formulated his project of Poland's mission in history somewhat later in *Księgi narodu polskiego i pielgrzymstwa polskiego* [The Books of the Polish Nation and the Polish Pilgrimage], written in Paris in 1832, after his

18 M. Nitka, *Twórczość malarzy polskich*, pp. 217–233.

19 *O naśladowaniu Chrystusa* by Thomas à Kempis x was the book that, according to his son's testimony, Mickiewicz would not part with for the rest of his life, although the work was most likely known to him before his arrival in Rome as in 1824, he gave a copy of *De Imitatione Christi* to Tomasz Zan; A. Litwornia, *Rzym Mickiewicza*, pp. 340–341.

20 Polish painters in Rome formed a union with the goal of developing a new historical painting, intended to be „the heart and fire of the nation”; M. Nitka, *Twórczość malarzy polskich*, pp. 195–200.

21 W. K. Stattler, *O akademii malarstwa i rzeźby w Rzymie*, „Rozmaitości Naukowe”, 2 (1829) pp. 74.

22 A detailed analysis of the impact of Mickiewicz's concept on *Machabeusze* was made by the W. Suchocki, *Mickiewicz i „Machabeusze” Stattlera*, in: *Księga Mickiewiczowska*, red. Z. Trojanowiczowa, Z. Przychodniak, Poznań 1998, pp. 117–134.

return from Rome.²³ They constitute the concept of Poland's messianism, initiated, among others, by the reading of Thomas à Kempis, which is supposed to bring freedom to other peoples through its voluntary suffering. Stattler also directly demonstrated this idea of the "bard of freedom" in the portrait of Adam Mickiewicz from the 1840s, described by Leopold Meyet. He depicted the poet

[...] in a sitting posture in a pilgrim's robe, with a cross in his hand, reading *the Books of Pilgrimage* to our people. In front of this painting, the artist placed himself, with his first-born son Adam and his wife leaning on his shoulder, and a little further his friend Antoni Strzelecki.²⁴

The portrait has not survived, and only a sketch of it remained entitled *W pracowni artysty* [In the artist's studio] [fig. 5], where one can recognize the outline of the scene described by Meyet. This is because it is a "representation within representation" – here, in the studio, a group of two men and a woman have gathered in front of the painting; one of the husbands with a child in his arms (probably Stattler himself) is explaining to the others the work in front of which they are standing, picturing Mickiewicz as a prophet, shown in the moment of "preaching" the message to the people. It would be hard to find a more literal illustration of the prophetic nature of the poet's message to the painter. The concept of the message of the Polish Nation, formulated by the author of the *Books of Polish Pilgrimage*, was finally shown by Stattler in *The Maccabees*, completed in the 1840s. The painting was shown in Paris in 1844, impressing both bards – Mickiewicz and Słowacki.²⁵

During the formation of the messianic concept of the history of Poland in the *Books of the Polish Nation and Polish Pilgrimage*, the poet also met future Resurrectionists who wanted, like him, to work among and for the benefit of the emigrants of the November Uprising. Years later, Father Paweł Smo-

- 23 The core of Mickiewicz's conception of the Polish nation's history is considered to be the vision of history contained in the works of: *Dziady cz. III, Księgi narodu polskiego i Księgi pielgrzymstwa polskiego, Do matki Polki oraz Literatura słowiańska*.
- 24 L. Meyet, *Wizerunki Adama Mickiewicza*, „Tygodnik Ilustrowany”, 12 (1888) no 311, p. 372. This description was based on Stattler's own stories; W. K. Stattler, *Przypomnienie starych znajomości*, p. 266.
- 25 D. Kudelska, *Juliusz Słowacki i sztuki plastyczne*, Lublin 1997, pp. 175–222.

5. Wojciech Korneli Stattler, *In the artist's studio*, watercolor, gouache on paper, 6,3 × 7,6 cm. From the Pawlikowski Collection, inventory no. 2229. The V. Stefanyk Lviv Scientific Library. National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, inventory no. 14944. Photo M. Nitka



Smolikowski's study on *Stosunek Adama Mickiewicza do X. Zmartwychwstańców* [Adam Mickiewicz's attitude to the Resurrectionists] begins with the statement:

The Resurrectionists, not only as Poles, but also as monks, owe much to Mickiewicz. In some respects he was the founder of their congregation, at least it originated from his thoughts, and although he himself could not be a member of the congregation because he was married, he at least supported it with his heart, advice and even financially in its most difficult beginnings [underlined by MN].²⁶

26 P. Smolikowski, *Stosunek Adama Mickiewicza do X. Zmartwychwstańców*, Kraków 1898 za: oprac. „Zeszyty Historyczno-Teologiczne”, 12 (2006) no 12, pp. 325–326.

The poet, as he inspired the painter to undertake the messianic path of work, also influenced young emigrants to follow the path of vocation towards the future resurrection. Mickiewicz was first acquainted with Bogdan Jański, with whom he met most likely as early as 1832 in Paris, while collaborating on the editing of “Pielgrzym Polski” [Polish Pilgrim]²⁷ and translating the *Books of the Polish Nation and Polish Pilgrimage* into French. According to many émigré sources, it was the bard who had a significant influence on the spiritual turn to Catholicism of the future founder of the Resurrectionist Order.²⁸ Hieronim Kajsiewicz also met Mickiewicz in 1832, who was still a novice poet, and, according to the already quoted account by Father Smolikowski, was converted thanks to the bard.²⁹ Father Smolikowski wrote,

Father Kajsiewicz described that he first began to think about religion only when he went to visit the poet and, not finding him at home, heard from the doorkeeper that ‘Mr. Mickiewicz at this hour on Sundays is always at Mass at the parish – ‘It struck me, said Fr. Kajsiewicz, if Mickiewicz goes to Church, I thought to myself, then religion must be something serious.’ Seeing Mickiewicz practicing, many thought the same.³⁰

Similarly, Father Semenenko met the bard during his mission in Paris and was naturally greatly influenced by him; they were also united by a common interest in Thomas à Kempis.³¹ However, the future brothers’ initial fascination with the poet, their reception of the messianic vision of Poland proclaimed by him, subsided with their exploration of Catholic doctrine, increasingly abandoned by Mickiewicz, who was attracted by mystical currents. The friendly paths of the bard and the Resurrectionists diverged more and more sharply, starting in 1838, when their relationship can be seen cooling down in Jański’s

27 Z. Sudolski, *Adam Mickiewicz w pamiętnikach Bogdana Jańskiego*, „Rocznik Towarzystwa Literackiego imienia Adama Mickiewicza”, 3 (1968) p. 94; M. Chotyńska, *Bogdan Jański i jego współcześni*, „Perspektywy Kultury”, 29 (2020) no 2, pp. 25–42.

28 P. Smolikowski, *Stosunek Adama Mickiewicza*, p. 229.

29 The beginnings of an acquaintance of A. Mickiewicz and H. Kajsiewicz, see: K. Rutkowski, *Stos dla Adama. Albo kacerze i kapłani*, Warszawa 1994, pp. 18–50.

30 P. Smolikowski, *Stosunek Adama Mickiewicza*, p. 330.

31 K. Rutkowski, *Stos dla Adama*, pp. 119–134.

and Mickiewicz's correspondence.³² The open conflict "over the government of Polish souls," began between the two in the 1840s, when, in 1841 the author of *Dziady* joined the Circle of the Divine Cause, led by Andrzej Towiański.³³ On February 18th, 1842, Father Semenenko wrote:

sad [...] things you herald, especially regarding Adam [...], the very one we feared the most! [...] since it is no longer about Adam himself here, whose soul, however, is still so dear to us, but about his entire influence on so many other souls, on all of Poland; that influence for which we have been blessing God until now, because it served him, from which we have forecast so much both for Poland and for the whole Church!³⁴

Mickiewicz also spread the views of the Towians, which were fought by the Resurrectionists, from the chair of the Collège de France, where he was appointed as a lecturer in Slavic literatures on December 20th, 1840.³⁵ Accepting the challenge of fighting for the government of Polish souls in exile, Father Kajsiewicz, as the "new Skarga" (as he was described by Father Smolikowski),³⁶ was appointed on September 11th, 1842 as a Polish preacher at St. Roch Church in Paris, where he stigmatized the Towians from the pulpit.³⁷ The Resurrectionists did not only fight against Towianism but also to have Mickiewicz abandon the Circle of the Divine Dispute and return to the bosom of the Church. For this reason, they encouraged the poet to come to Rome. The poet's arrival in the Eternal City on February 7th, 1848, gave hope for his "conversion." However, the bard had his own intentions for his visit along the Tiber and wrote:

32 Z. Sudolski, *Adam Mickiewicz w pamiętnikach Bogdana Jańskiego*, p. 100.

33 K. Rutkowski, *Braterstwo albo śmierć. Zabijanie Mickiewicza w Kole Bożym*, Paryż 1988, pp. 11 et al.

34 Letter from P. Semenenko to Jan Koźmian, Rome, 18 II 1842, cit. per P. Semenenko CR, *Listy*, vol. 2, *Studia Zmartwychwstańcze*, Rzym 1986, pp. 343–344.

35 M. Kuziak, *Mickiewicz w Collège De France. Wykład, Humanistyka, Polityka*, „Teksty Drugie”, 3 (2019) pp. 36–54; K. Rutkowski, *Braterstwo albo śmierć*, pp. 90 et al.

36 P. Smolikowski, *Stosunek Adama Mickiewicza*, p. 338.

37 K. Rutkowski, *Stos dla Adama*, pp. 69–82.

the epiphany of the Christian spirit in politics, the building of the state for Christ must take its origins in Rome, which is the church and the state [...]. Called to conquer the state on earth for the sake of the spirit, from Rome, from our foundation to the earth we must go.³⁸

The Resurrectionists, who had the privilege of ushering Poles to the Pope, organized two audiences for the poet, which ended in misunderstanding. During the audience on March 25th, 1848, the bard was accompanied by Father Alexander Jełowicki and Father Józef Hube, but despite their presence and advocacy, the poet gave a speech repeating all the principles of Towianism and urged the successor of St. Peter to help Poland.³⁹ Four days later, the bard formed the Polish Pledge in Rome, the seed of an armed group, for whose world freedom mission he unsuccessfully tried to obtain the blessing of Pope Pius IX.⁴⁰ His newly-formed pledge departed from Rome on April 10th, 1848, from the church of San Andrea della Valle,⁴¹ where he gave a farewell speech. It was obvious to the Resurrectionists that Mickiewicz positioned himself in the role of almost the prophet of the resurrected Poland, bringing freedom to the world, with the Legion as its instrument. Fr. Smolikowski noted that before he left Rome, participants chanted "May Mickiewicz lead us!"⁴² even though such a call could refer to Christ. Shortly after its formation, the Legion, like the "revolution", was crushed.⁴³ However, its remembrance in Italy provided the Poles goodwill among the leaders of the Risorgimento and at the same time antagonized the Holy See

38 A. Mickiewicz, *Do braci, 5 X 1847*, in: A. Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, vol. 13: *Pisma towianistyczne, przemówienia, szkice filozoficzne*, Warszawa 2001, p. 299. About A. Mickiewicz's stay in Italy, see: G. Maver, *Literatura polska i jej związki z Włochami*, Warszawa 1988, pp. 317–324.

39 H. Batowski, A. Szklarska-Lohmanowa, *Legion Mickiewicza*, Wrocław 1958, pp. 42 et al.

40 The act of the formation of the Polish Legion was signed by: Siodołkiewicz, Zaleski, Niesiołowski, Sasaki, Stachowski, Zieliński, Kurowski, Orłowski, Marconi, Różniecki, Geritz, Kamiński, Lewicki, Mickiewicz; A. Mickiewicz, [*Akt zawiązania Zastępu Polskiego*], in: A. Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, vol. 12: *Legion Polski. Trybuna Ludów*, Warszawa 1997, p. 9.

41 A. Mickiewicz, [*Rozkaz dzienny*], in: A. Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, vol. 12, p. 10.

42 P. Smolikowski, *Stosunek Adama Mickiewicza*, p. 354.

43 K. Kostenicz, *Legion włoski i „Trybuna Ludów”*. *Kronika życia i twórczości Mickiewicza. Styczeń 1848 grudzień 1849*, Warszawa 1969.

to the “Polish question,” becoming a problem for the Resurrectionists in their plans to build a conservative papal party to counterbalance the revolutionary ideas of the Towians.⁴⁴ The fathers did not relent in these endeavors, while constantly trying to rebuild their relations with Mickiewicz.

In this new political reality, Wojciech Kornelii Stattler returned to Rome in the early 1850s. The painter certainly approved of Mickiewicz’s Towian views, as evidenced by their cordial contacts and by the fact that he arranged that the Jagiellonian University forwarded a proposal for the poet to take the chair of the history of literature, which ultimately did not happen.⁴⁵ Wojciech Korneli came to the Tiber River in 1852 with his son Henryk – a sculptor, educated at the Cracow Academy of Fine Arts. The author of the *Maccabees* remained in the Eternal City until 1857, with a several-month break between 1854 and 1855. The Stattlers had their own atelier in Via Babuino 22.⁴⁶ The Cracow artists quickly became part of the Resurrectionist circle, especially since Father Semenenko was fascinated by the aesthetics of the Nazarenes, represented by Johann Friedrich Overbeck and his Polish followers Edward Brzozowski and Leopold Nowotny, whose spiritual teacher was Stattler.⁴⁷ In his 1853 letter to Wincenty Karwicki, Stattler recalled a visit to St. Claudius Church, where

Father Hieronim Kajsiewicz is currently teaching. On the first day of my arrival there, accompanied by the church singing in Polish ‘Holy God, Holy Strong God,’ it did not seem to me that these were earthly voices, and I could not get out of my exuberance, I cried like a child.⁴⁸

44 G. Maver, *Literatura polska i jej związki z Włochami*, pp. 408–409.

45 A. Litwornia, *Rzym Mickiewicza*, pp. 127–129.

46 F. S. Bonfigli, *The artistic directory or guide to the studios in Rome*, Rome 1860, p. 91. T. Padalica (Zenon Fisz), *Listy z podróży*, vol. 2, Wilno 1859, p. 147.

47 In the collection of the Congregation of the Resurrectionists are the works of J. F. Overbeck’s student E. Brzozowski and L. Nowotny, who was fascinated by him and was introduced to this Nazarene by Father Semenenko, see: M. Nitka, *Biblia ilustrowana polska Leopolda Nowotnego a ikonografia historii Polski w sztuce nazareńskiej*, „Sacrum et Decorum”, X (2017) s. 50–66.

48 Letter from W. K. Stattler to W. Karwickiego, Rome, 25 II 1853, cit. per P. Biliński, *Rzymskie listy Wojciecha K. Stattlera do Wincentego Karwickiego*, „Biuletyn Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej”, 55 (2005) p. 65. I thank Prof. P. Biliński for bringing this publication to my attention.

The trace of Henryk Stattler's contacts with the congregation are his busts of priests Kajsiewicz and Semenenko.⁴⁹ The Stattlers, however, fell into considerable financial troubles and Wojciech mortgaged his works at the coal merchant Pietro Moroni. He reminisced:

[...] and I had my atelier decorated with my own paintings, made in Cracow, which I brought with me [to Rome]. In the misfortune into which we then fell, namely a severe illness of gangrene [...] I was forced to pawn them in the hands of the coalman Mr. Piero Moroni, who lived in Via Scanderbeg 122, who lent me 1,081 scudi for two promissory notes.⁵⁰

The unredeemed works were lost. However, it seems probable that *The Baptism of Christ in the Jordan*, which was kept by the Resurrectionists, may be Stattler's only surviving work from this group. Indeed, the completed canvas of the Baptism of Christ is mentioned by Maciej Szukiewicz, among the paintings that Stattler pawned in Rome.⁵¹ The dating of the painting to the 1850s is also evidenced by the type of Mickiewicz's portrait. It is no longer the young man known from the 1830 Roman portrait, but a middle-aged man whose features resemble the image of the poet popularized thanks to Jan Mieczkowski's photograph [fig. 6]. This dating of the Baptism of Christ is also indicated by the way the painting is executed; the soft brushstrokes and gentle modeling of the figures are more reminiscent of Stattler's late work than his early "radical" period, characterized by his fascination with Overbeck and the Nazarenes. The idealistic depiction of Christ's face, consistent with the canon of the Savior's from the Baptism of Christ in Carlo Maratta's paintings from the Roman churches of Santa Maria degli Angeli and Santa Sabina (one of many works of this artist's circle), as well as the landscape with mountains on the horizon and a pink and blue sky, absent in the Baptism of Christ of 1825, modeled on Thorvaldsen's work, are

49 The plaster casts can be found in the collection of the Congregation of the Resurrectionists in Via San Sebastianello 11.

50 Art History Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Special Collections, no 290-II, W. K. Stattler, *testament* [will], p. 354.

51 M. Szukiewicz, *Od wydawcy*, in: W. K. Stattler, *Pamiętnik W. K. Stattlera. Studia malarzkie w Krakowie i Rzymie przed 100 laty*, Kraków 1916, p. 13.

6. Jan Mieczkowski, *Portrait of Adam Mickiewicz*, c. 1860, print on albumen paper; 10,1 × 6,5 cm National Library F.13704. Public domain, <https://polona.pl/item-view/49f73fef-0549-41ba-9cd4-ee011791ee01?page=>, DOA: 3.11.2023.



also far from the aesthetics of this group.⁵² Therefore, in his late work, Stattler returned to his juvenile idea of depicting the baptism of Christ, referring in this work to the Roman tradition criticized in his earlier writings, but at the same time repeating the idea of showing the bard as the Prophet of the Nation, and the Nation itself as Christ. The opportunity for the revival of this idea may have been the reunion of Stattler and Mickiewicz in Paris in 1855, when Mickiewicz was going to Constantinople to fight again for “our freedom and yours.” Stattler and his son attended a farewell breakfast with the poet.⁵³

Father Semenenko, who advised the artist in 1853, must have been familiar with Mickiewicz’s fascination with mystical ideas distant from Catholic doctrine in Stattler’s thought at the time:

I dare therefore to tell you once again with all humility and love, but at the same time with all strength, that you should return, and if you have never been, that you should turn to the simple faith, in which alone is salvation. And this simple faith, therefore, depends on believing with a simple, sincere, childlike and not a sophisticated and demanding mind all that the Lord God in the Person of Christ the Lord reveals to us through His Holy Church, and not through anyone else. The principle is to not only believe no one else besides the Church, but not even to listen to it, according to Christ’s words: ‘Many shall come in my name saying, Here is Christ, and here is Christ: believe not, and listen not!’ Whoever, therefore, only gives an ear to those coming not from the Church, that he may learn something from them about God and the truth and Christ, he is already disbelieving Christ and departing from the faith [underline by MN].⁵⁴

The depiction of John the Baptist as Mickiewicz would have revealed the transcendent meaning of the biblical story, which was the purpose

52 The similarity between Stattler’s sketch and the work of Carlo Maratta was already observed by J. Mycielski, *Sto lat dziejów malarstwa w Polsce*, Kraków 1897 o. 269. C. Maratta was one among few masters of the *Seicento* esteemed in the 19th century Rome.

53 „Czas”, 25 (1856) p. 2.

54 Letter from P. Semenenko to Stattler [Stański Wojciech], Albano, 12 VII 1853, Letter no 99 (ACRR 3627), cit. per P. Semenenko, *Listy 1846–1856*, vol. 8, ed. L. Drózdź, *Studia Zmartwychwstańcze*, Rzym 2002, pp. 225–226.

of the imagery postulated by Stattler. The messianic message of Christ's Baptism in the Jordan was far from the evangelical narrative and Catholic doctrine, but in line with the painter's attachment to the ideas preached by the bard, with whom he remained in close relations throughout his life.⁵⁵ After the poet's death, the Cracovian noted in a letter to Józef Bohdan Zaleski:

he [Mickiewicz – MN] was for me the first of the people in the world into whom – after my father – I looked, not with my eyes, but with my whole soul. He was for me a man in whose word I believed like in those who looked at miraculous things, who listened to divine teaching with the power of faith.⁵⁶

Korneli's son Henryk was also supposed to erect a monument to the bard. His father wrote about the work:

I would mine aggregates from underground to forge fiery torches of light in you, still living and burning, which today, mourning the extinction of his message, you would not be able to deny him your splendor. I would forge you from marble, like Canova, going to the grave of the fatherland.⁵⁷

Such a painting monument – a testament also seems to be the painting *The Baptism of Christ in the Jordan*, which the indebted Stattler probably managed to leave to the Resurrectionists. Mickiewicz remained for the author of *the Maccabees* the one who outlined the messianic conception of Poland's fate, illustrated in his most important painting, the spiritual authorship of which he ascribed to the poet without regret and with pride. The Resurrectionists,

- 55 Mickiewicz asked the painter about his work in letters, consulted him about Fine Arts, and Stattler would send him his ideas. Mickiewicz even mentioned, „if you let me know about you, I will also send you my plans and painting dreams, from which you will make whatever you like.” Letter from A. Mickiewicz to W. K. Stattler, Paris, v 1837, in: A. Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, vol. 15: *Listy 1830–1841*, no 452, Warszawa 2003.
- 56 The Jagiellonian Library, ms. 9231 II, Letter from W. K. Stattler to J. B. Zaleski, 17 XII 1855, p. 118.
- 57 *Ibid.*, p. 120–121. See also: P. Szubert, *Pomnik Adama Mickiewicza w Krakowie – idea i realizacje*, in: *Dzieła czy kicz*, ed. E. Grabska, T. S. Jaroszewski, Warszawa 1981, pp. 160–242.

although did not share Mickiewicz's conception, kept Stattler's painting as a visual testimony of their long and important disputes with the emigration "stung" by the Towianist ideas also preached by the poet.

Abstract: The article examines various ideological attitudes among the Great Emigration, represented by a circle of Adam Mickiewicz's friends, the painter Wojciech Korneli Stattler, and the Congregation of the Resurrectionists, especially Father Hieronim Kajsiwicz and Father Piotr Semenenko. The starting point for the discussion of the attitudes is a painting discovered during the inventory and documentation of the art collection of the Resurrectionist Order in Rome, depicting the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan River, where John the Baptist has the facial features of Adam Mickiewicz. The painting was attributed to Stattler, based on an analysis of the oeuvre and tracing the painter's connections with Mickiewicz. This depiction of Christ's baptism is linked to Mickiewicz's messianism, and later also to Towianism and its impact on the emigration. Against this background are shown the attitudes of the Resurrectionists, who were involved in fighting against Towianism. However, they never gave up trying to "reclaim" the poet for the Polish cause and kept the memory of the poet alive.

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