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# **LIFE OF SAINT JOHN CANTIUS UNVEILED IN A WALL PAINTING AT THE FORMER ZAMOYSKI ACADEMY IN ZAMOŚĆ**

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## **Abstract**

The paper presents the visual aspects of the life and miracles performed by Saint John Cantius on a wall painting in the building of the former Zamoyski Academy. Saint John Cantius was a professor at the University of Kraków, philosopher and, above all, a clergyman with an extraordinary ability to attract the faithful. He was characterised by his devotion to God, high intellect, goodness, modesty, helpfulness and diligence. Already during his lifetime, he performed miracles and after his death he contributed to many recoveries. He was beatified in 1680 and canonised in 1767. His cult was initially concentrated in Kraków, but before his canonisation it spread across the Poland and Europe. Poles, Czechs, but also French and Italians made pilgrimages to his tomb, hoping to be heard and interceded for. Saint John Cantius became a patron of the Zamoyski Academy in 1702 and his cult contributed to the commemoration of his person. The historical decorations depicting the saint was discovered during renovation works in one of the rooms in the west wing. Only a part of it remained and the rest was irretrievably damaged. Thanks to interdisciplinary research in the fields of architecture, conservation, archival research, hagiography, 3D scanning, endoscopy and thermal imaging, it was possible to draw conclusions which enabled the determination of the period when the painting was created, the probable author and, most importantly, the identification of scenes from the life of the saint which had been irretrievably lost. The personage depicted on the painting was also unquestionably confirmed. The period of partitions and communism, which lasted for almost 200 years on the Polish territory, made his person almost forgotten. This can be seen in the paintings - first, the Russian army painted over the polychrome wall paintings and then, it was forgotten. As after the fall of communism the cult of the saint began to revive, maybe the wall decorations in Zamość will also see the light of day and bring back the memory of the saint to Zamość. Saint John Cantius is the patron of Poland and Lithuania, Kęty, Kraków, the Archdiocese of Kraków, Lublin, Bielsko-Żywiec Diocese, professors, teachers, students, and about 600 schools in the country.

**Keywords:** Saint John Cantius, John of Kęty, hagiography, Zamoyski Academy, Zamość

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## **1. Introduction**

The paper presents the personage and miracles of Saint John Cantius in the scenes immortalised in one of the rooms of the former Zamoyski Academy building in Zamość. Although so far no one has written about mural paintings of Saint John Cantius, the subject of conservation of such paintings was discussed by Katarzyna Górecka [1] and the subject of saints by Magdalena Burlacu [2] or Merișor Dominte and Stelian Onica [3]. Saint John Cantius became famous for his goodness, wisdom, Benedictine diligence and piety even during his lifetime. He was a professor, dean, and rector, having completed both philosophical and theological studies. In his scholarly work he was involved in interpreting the Bible but also in transcribing books. He was also a priest and made several pilgrimages to Rome. He was involved in charity work, supporting poor students and people in need. He performed miracles during his lifetime. Shortly after his death, the church in which he was buried became a place of cult and numerous pilgrimages from the farthest corners of Poland and Europe. In 1703 he became a patron of the Zamoyski Academy and the annual feast in his honour turned into an indulgence and even a festival. Therefore, at the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century his figure and the miracles he performed were immortalised on the vault and the walls of the chapel dedicated to him. His cult was considerably suppressed during the period of partitions and communism, however, after 1989 it returned to strength. Saint John Cantius is the patron saint of Poland and Lithuania, of the poor, of teachers, professors, university students, of many dioceses and about 600 schools.

The main aim of the paper is an attempt to identify and present the personage of Saint John Cantius depicted on the recently discovered polychrome paintings of the Zamoyski Academy building in Zamość and to show the influence of the growing cult of the saint on the development of architecture and decorative arts in the Baroque period. The research on the historical decorations involved a hagiographic analysis but also made use of the latest technological developments such as 3D scanning. Both these methods allowed us to deepen our knowledge of the saint, to identify existing scenes and those that are missing. The study not only presents the figure of the saint, but also provides guidelines for a full reconstruction of the painting according to 18<sup>th</sup> century standards.

## **2. Saint John Cantius**

John Cantius (John of Kęty) was born in 1397 [4]. His youth is practically unknown [5], described only about 200 years after his death [6]. Hagiographies show him as exemplary, modest, pious, avoiding temptations, hard-working and overall not causing any educational problems. At the age of 23, he began his studies at Kraków's Studium Generale, at the Faculty of Atrium (the equivalent of today's Philosophy). At that time, he was already considered very old to begin his studies. He obtained his bachelor degree (the current equivalent of a master degree) in 1415 and three years later a master degree (the current equivalent of a

doctorate). He was earning his living by giving private lessons and by his pastoral work. In 1421 he became the head of the Holy Sepulchre monastery school in Miechów, where he was responsible for clerics. He continued working there until 1429, studying and copying the works of Saint Augustine, Thomas and Aristotle, as well as writing songs. When the position of lecturer in Philosophy became vacant, he immediately returned to Kraków and began working at the university. At the same time, he began his theological studies, which lasted 13 years (he obtained his bachelor degree in 1439 and master degree in 1443 at the age of 53). In 1439, he became a canon and cantor of the collegiate church of Saint Florian in Kleparz, at the same time taking up the presbytery in Olkusz (which he resigned after a few months - giving up at the same time from a considerable income) [7]. He was a dean of the Faculty of Philosophy three times (in the years 1432/33, 1437/38 and in 1438), and from 1434 he held the position of the rector of the Collegium Maius [7, p. 56]. He was involved in the affairs of the university and in 1441 he was elected a deputy to carry out its reform [8]. He lived a humble life. For some time, he was not eating meat and was limiting the number of meals to the amount necessary to live. He was often hungry for example during pilgrimages [9]. As a part of penance, he was wearing a cilice [9, p. 29]. It is estimated that he transcribed a total of 18,000 pages, preserved in the Jagiellonian Library and the Vatican collections. It has not been possible to establish unequivocally whether the work of a copyist served him as a source of income or whether this was his way of deepening his knowledge. He donated the books after his death to the college, which later became an academic tradition. He went on pilgrimage to Rome four times, possibly also to the Holy Land. His professional work involved the interpretation of Holy Scripture, mainly the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. He was academic advisor of 42 bachelors and 9 masters [7, p. 54]. Thanks to his gentle approach, kindly wisdom, he enjoyed great popularity among the townsfolk of Cracow, who often came to him for advice [5].

Piotr Skarga wrote about him: "In observance of fasts he was diligent, in patience gracious, in faith helpful, in love fervent, in humility lowly, in meditation on the mysteries of God high, in expectation strong, in endurance valiant. Saint John was a professor, protector of university students, father of the poor, patron of many universities and colleges. Learning was for him one of the means leading to the ideal of holiness. Another was humility, and yet another - contempt for material goods." [10]

He died at the age of 83 and was buried on the same day under the pulpit of Saint Annes Church in Kraków [7]. Two years after his death, the parish priest Maciej from Kościan wrote down 92 miracles occurring in the years 1475-1483, which contributed to obtaining permission to move his remains from under the pulpit to the area of the chancel [7]. Thanks to the work of Bartłomiej of Sieniawa and Piotr Lubart, another study was prepared which presents 127 miracles from the period of 1475-1518. The cult of Saint John gradually developed, attracting pilgrims from distant parts of Poland and even from Bohemia, Italy and France. His burial place was visited by King John III

Sobieski before and after the victorious Battle of Vienna. In 1621, at the synod of bishops in Piotrków, a request was made to the Holy See to begin the process of beatification, which took place on 27 September 1680. However, the process of his canonization turned out to be very complicated and even politicized. There were even attempts to have him removed from the list of the beatified and 'thrown out' his remains of the church. All these actions took place during the period of schism in the Church. For the beatification process, Kantes writings were collected for six years; after the rejection of his candidature, for ten years people were trying to prove that some of them were not written by him. Finally, after deleting some texts attributed to Cantius, Pope Clement XIII acknowledged him. On 16 July 1767 he was canonised. In 1737, he was declared the patron of Poland and Lithuania by Clement XII. He is also a patron of Kęty, Kraków, the archdiocese of Kraków, Lublin, Bielsko-Żywiec diocese, professors, teachers and students and Catholic schools.

### **3. Creating of the Zamoyski Academy**

Zamość as a town was founded somewhat by accident. Its founder Jan Zamoyski (Hetman and Great Chancellor of the Crown) originally planned to build a residential mansion with prominent defensive features. However, already in 1579, he decided to enlarge his project by adding a town to the residence. Zamoyski's project was soon after implemented by Bernardo Morando, an architect of Italian origin [11]. The whole establishment was built on a raw root "in cruda radice" [12] and consisted of a town designed in an anthropomorphic layout (the heart was the market square with the town hall, the head was Zamoyski's residence, the lungs were the collegiate church, etc.) surrounded by walls on marshy ground. In 1580, the town was granted a foundation charter, which provided numerous privileges, including exemption from taxes and customs duties for residents from all over Poland for a period of 25 years, which was one of the main factors in its development. Initially, Zamość was to be inhabited only by Catholics, with one church - the Collegiate Church - able to accommodate the population of the whole town (about 3000 people). Shortly afterwards Zamoyski changed his mind and invited rich foreigners (Sephardic Jews, Armenians, Greeks), who further fuelled the town's development. They built the most magnificent Armenian houses as well as their temples. The town developed very quickly, as already in 1591 there were 217 houses and only 26 empty plots. Zamoyski managed all this thanks to his good level of education, intelligence, entrepreneurship and skilful political manoeuvring. Jan Zamoyski inherited 3.5 villages from his parents, while at the time of his death he owned 11 towns and over 200 villages and was managing 12 towns and 612 villages from the royal estates.

Zamoyski's aim was to build a city in a modern style, meeting all highest standards. He built a residence, a magnificent collegiate church, a commercial and defensive centre; he even had a private army. He still needed a scientific centre (he was studying in Padua where afterwards he was holding the position

of rector), hence he understood the need for such a place [13]. As early as in 1580, Zamoyski wrote to the Apostolic Nuncio specifying the concept of creating an academy [14]. It was to educate young noblemen for the governance of Poland at that time. He believed that the creation of a city organism had to be based on well-organised administration cooperating with the Church. The equipping of the presbytery and foundation of the university were a priority, and both these institutions were to be dependent on each other [13, p. 140]. The process of establishing the academy proved to be a laborious and complicated endeavour, which only his grandson lived to see fully completed. The academy was founded as the first private university and the third in Poland, after Kraków and Vilnius. On 15 March 1595, the academic year was inaugurated in temporarily commissioned premises [15], which included 5 faculties, 5 auditoriums and 9 chambers [16]. In the same year, a printing press was opened, which first printing was the 'Proclamation' [17] about the establishment of the academy and two textbooks for students. Already after two years, the academy taught all sciences and issued doctoral degrees, had a library and dormitory in separate buildings [14]. Both the poor, who did not pay for education, and the rich nobility were studying at the academy - one of the students was Jan Zamoyski's son, Tomasz [18]. The Chair of Theology was established in 1603 and was headed by a Franciscan, Dominik Convalis [19]. In 1627 and 1633, the building was consumed by fire. Due to its poor technical condition, in 1639, Katarzyna Zamoyska began construction of a new building of the academy, in the form which has probably survived to the present day. The work was completed around 1658 [14]. In 1702 John Cantius became the academy's patron saint. The 18<sup>th</sup> century was not kind to the building. The difficult geopolitical situation contributed to the gradual moral as well as technical decline of the academy. For example, outbuildings were put in the courtyard, where professors were keeping livestock [16]. During this period, there were four faculties: Theology, Law, Medicine and Philosophy [20]. It was not until the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century that major works began to improve the technical condition, as well as redevelop the moral bases of the academy. Despite the large endowment of the building, which consisted of the legacies of the Zamoyski family and the funds donated by the professors in their wills, the academy had considerable problems with liquidity and with obtaining the guaranteed resources. The technical condition of the building in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century necessitated a major renovation, which took a relatively long time and was harmful to many elements. At that time most of the vaults of the building were replaced, external walls were reinforced or replastered, part of the cellars were made or filled in, a mansard roof and a polychrome baroque façade were created. The academy was closed by the Austrian authorities in 1784 [21] and from that moment a gymnasium was functioning in the buildings. In 1809, the army moved into the building and for almost 60 years it was the only use of the building. During that time, many renovations were carried out, which improved the technical condition of the building, but deprived it of its original stylistic features (all wall decorations were painted over, most of the stone portals were

removed, the roof was changed, the arcades were bricked up, etc.). Currently, the building is undergoing restoration works in order to bring it back to its splendour.

#### **4. Polychrome painting depicting the scenes of life of John Cantius**

Art in religious buildings played a pedagogical as well as a decorative role. The original role of sacral paintings was to give a lesson of faith to the illiterate. In the case of the walls of the academy however, it was a visual representation of the saint's achievements, an encouragement to piety and a commemoration of such a prominent figure.

The first description of the decorations - "walls and vaults painted with various church stories" comes from 1804 [21, vol. 2, p. 284]. At that time the academy was no longer functioning, it was under the administration of the army, but the complete classroom equipment was still preserved (six benches, a table, and a round stool for the professor, a gradus - teacher's desk) [21, vol. 2, p. 353]. At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the room in question probably housed a chapel, which, around 1746, was moved to a new location with three windows instead of two [22]. In 1702, John Cantius was chosen as the patron of the Zamoyski Academy [23]. His cult, forming in the 17<sup>th</sup> century around Kraków [24], spread throughout Poland in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It accelerated rapidly with the beginning of his beatification process. The festive celebration of the patron saint's day initiated by the academic community turned into an indulgence and even a festival, for which the entire academy was decorated and the chapel adorned with upholstery and illuminated with lamps; an organist and a cantor were also employed [22, p. 98]. The expenses for this purpose exceeded the annual salary of the caretaker. Traditionally, the procession began at the academy and proceeded to the academic chapel dedicated to John Cantius in the Zamość Collegiate Church. All these events, in a way, affected the decision to honour the patron by recording a scene from his life on the walls and vault of the chapel. According to historical data, the chapel at the Zamoyski Academy was painted by Jan Kanty Siarczyński [25], who was an alumnus of the Zamoyski Academy. It is known that in the west wing were two rooms decorated with illusionistic polychrome paintings dating from a similar period. We also know that these two wall decorations were made by two different artists. The vaults of both rooms were made in the 18<sup>th</sup> century during the greatest renovation in the history of the building. In 1752, 24 construction foremen worked under the supervision of J. Bem [22, p. 98]. In 1772, the city passed under the administration of the Austrians (which meant the suspension of the activities and certainly further development of the university). Additionally, Cantius was canonised in 1767, hence the date of the creation of decorations should be sought between 1752 and 1767. Siarczyński died at the age of 31 in 1762 [25, p. 198]. Assuming that Siarczyński made the polychrome before 1762 [26], it remains to be established what kind of source he could have used for its execution. It is known that the academic library or the Zamoyski collections

contained many very interesting publications. It is also known that the academic printing house published at least five books describing the saint's life or his sermons. However, they did not contain any engravings. The best known paintings from the life of the saint, created before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, usually depict a scene with a jug or an epiphany, sometimes there were several scenes on one piece, such as the painting in Męcina [27] or Saint Anne's Church in Cracow [28]. The oldest known engraving depicting scenes from John's life (Figure 1) was published in a work of Augustin Braun in the cycle *Icones et miracula sanctorum Poloniae*, published in Cologne in 1606, modelled on an engraving by Giacomo Lauro from 1601, which contained 12 scenes from his life [29].



**Figure 1.** Copperplate engraving of A. Braun, 1606 [29].



In 1645 an engraving by David Tscherning containing 18 scenes was published (Figure 2). In 1775, 18 scenes were prepared for the occasion of the canonisation celebrations [30]. The engraving by David Tscherning available in the National Library comes from the Library of the Zamość Entail, thus it may be assumed that the author modelled it on the work of Tscherning and his biography, which was available on the spot. The author modified the scenery adapting it to the style of the time, the size of the room and its character.



**Figure 2.** Copperplate engraving of David Tscherning, 1645 [31].

The illusionistic polychromy was executed in a room with the dimensions of 820x895 cm. Its vault was made especially for this purpose by specially rounded edges of the lunettes, which allowed for a free representation without



bends. In the West Wing, another polychrome painting was found, on the same vaulted ceiling. The difference being that the polychrome is in a much worse state of preservation, although we know that it was a chapel room. After the takeover of the building by the army, the wall paintings was still visible for some time and the room itself was used as a warehouse. Repainting of the walls, insertion of buttress and work on the electrical installations caused further, very far-reaching damage.

**Table 1.** List of scenes on engravings from 1606, 1645, and in the Zamoyski Academy (x - denotes the existence of a scene in the representation).

The name of the scene	Episode	A. Braun 1606	D. Tscherning 1645	Zamoyski Academy app. 1750
Revelation of the Holy Mary	During his lifetime	x	x	x (1)
Empty plate	During his lifetime		x	x(2)
Broken jug	During his lifetime		x	x(4)
Deathbed	During his lifetime	x	x	x (7)
Fire in Krakow	During his lifetime		x	x (9)
Lecture	During his lifetime	x	x	x (11)
Plundering by robbers	During his lifetime	x	x	
Charity	During his lifetime	x		
Covering with a cloak	During his lifetime		x	
Return of a cloak	During his lifetime		x	x (14)
Expulsion of a demon from the church	During his lifetime		x	
Conversion of robbers	During his lifetime	x	x	
Healing 13 from fever	Miracles	x	x	
Healing a peasant	Miracles	x	x	x (3)
Healing 16	Miracles	x	x	
Release 6 from death	Miracles	x	x	
Healing of a paralysed	Miracles	x	x	
Healing 6	Miracles	x	x	
83 cured from various diseases	Miracles	x	x	

A comparison of the depicted scenes from the life of Saint John Cantius in various historical works with the wall paintings at the Academy in Zamość is shown in Table 1.

## **5. Events in the life of the saint**

By his life and actions, Saint John Cantius bore witness to his faith in God and his love for other human beings. By his behaviour, he showed all the virtues of a pious, humble and devoted person in the service of others. The events of his life described in historical sources relate to miracles performed by the saint, but also to moments of special kindness and revealed humanity towards the people in need and the disadvantaged. The life of John Cantius was so special and unique that it was represented not only in writing but also in engravings, paintings and sculptures. Among the life events it is worth mentioning those described below, some of which are depicted in the decorations discussed in this article.

While on one of his pilgrimages, John Cantius was attacked by some robbers who took everything he had. Asked if he had nothing else, he replied that he had already given everything away. After the robbers had left, he remembered the red coins he had sewn into his coat. Having returned to them, he gave them the money, asking them to forgive his lie, but he forgot about the coins. The robbers surprised by his behaviour gave him back everything they had taken earlier and left [4].

Seeing the fire that consumed the buildings on Saint Anne's Street in Kraków, John fell to his knees and asked God's favour so that the whole of Krakow would not burn down. Saint Stanislaus, Bishop of Kraków, appeared to him and ordered people to do penance for their sins or else the whole city would be destroyed by fire [4].

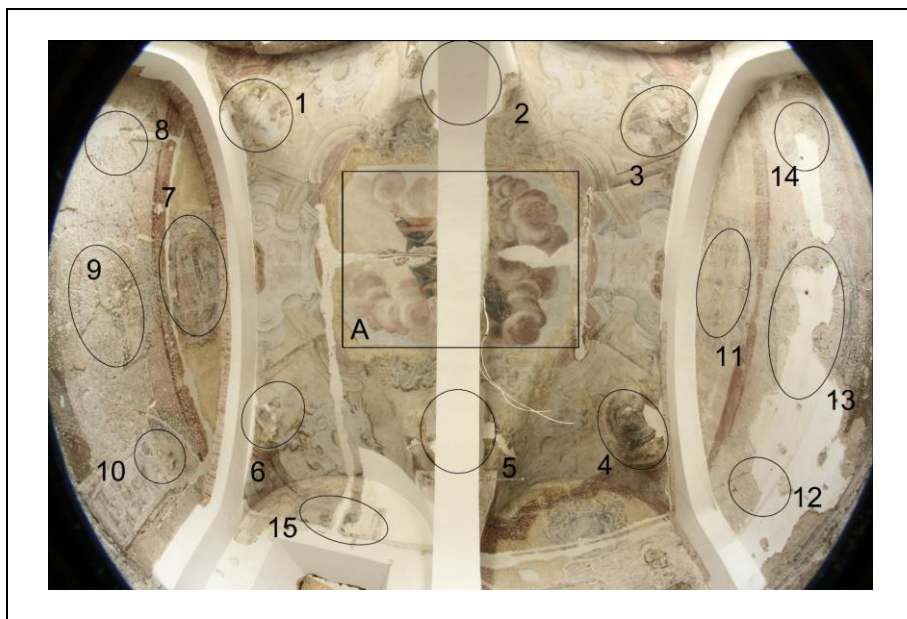
Another event showing John's devotion to his fellow men is the story of his encounter with a beggar. While walking from the college to the city he saw a poor man without shoes. He gave him his shoes and went home barefoot [4]. On Christmas Day, while walking at night to Morning Prayer, John Cantius met a beggar who was cold, lying on the ground, begging for mercy. Despite the winter weather, he gave him his coat. Legend has it that when he returned home, he found this robe in his flat, and it was supposed to have been brought by the Virgin Mary [4].

During a common meal with the professors, John found out that a hungry person was asking for food outside the university. He got up from the table and carried him what he had on his plate. When he returned, his plate was full again. From then on, when one of the professors called out: 'the poor man goes', he would reply: 'Christ goes'. Thanks to this event, an empty place was left at the table in case someone came hungry. This is also the origin of the Polish tradition of having an empty place setting at the table on Christmas Eve.

## **6. The description of the scenes**

At the moment fifteen scenes of varying size located around the central scene (A) can be identified. Eight scenes (1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11) are legible, slightly damaged, three scenes (2, 5, 12) are completely illegible, and four scenes which

contain a fragment of the figure of the saint are not identifiable (8, 10, 13, 14) (Figure 3). It is highly probable that there were eighteen of these scenes as in the case of the copperplate engraving of 1645 and the medallions in Kraków of 1775.

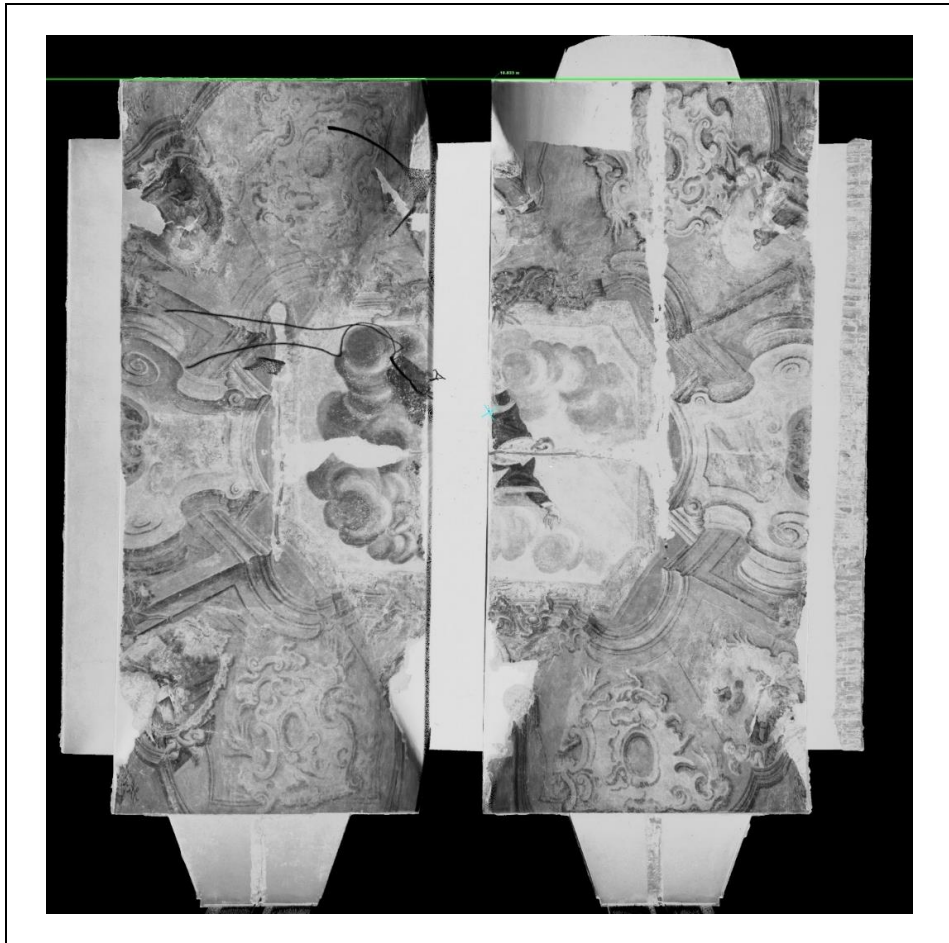


**Figure 3.** Location of individual scenes on the walls and vault, elaboration of K. Janus, 2021.



**Figure 4.** Scene of the Glorification of Saint John Cantius (A), photo of K. Janus, 2021.

The vault contained a total of seven scenes from the life of Cantius (the central one and six in medallions) (Figure 4).



**Figure 5.** Result of 3D scanning of the vault.

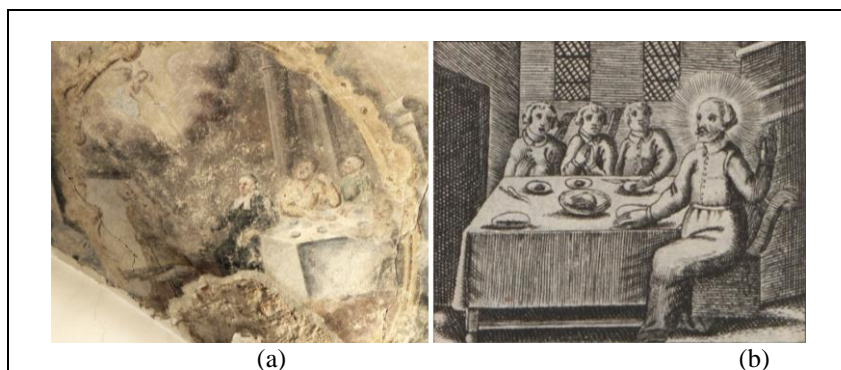
The central scene (A) depicts the glorification of Saint John on a cloud, in a toga, illuminated by the radiance of divine glory. Although part of it is invisible due to damage, it is certainly not a standard depiction of the saint known from other paintings or his biography (Figure 5).

- 1) The scene shows revelation of John Cantius to a kneeling man, probably a peasant, with two animals (a horse and a cow) which he was to release in exchange for healing (Figure 6).
- 2) and 5) Both scenes are illegible due to transformations.
- 3) The scene shows John in a professorial toga sitting at a table with others during a meal. In the doorway a figure of a poor man can be seen to whom John gives his meal. According to a legend, on his return John found his plate full, which is shown in the figure of an angel with a plate. There is also an empty place setting on the table (the author depicted two, but it

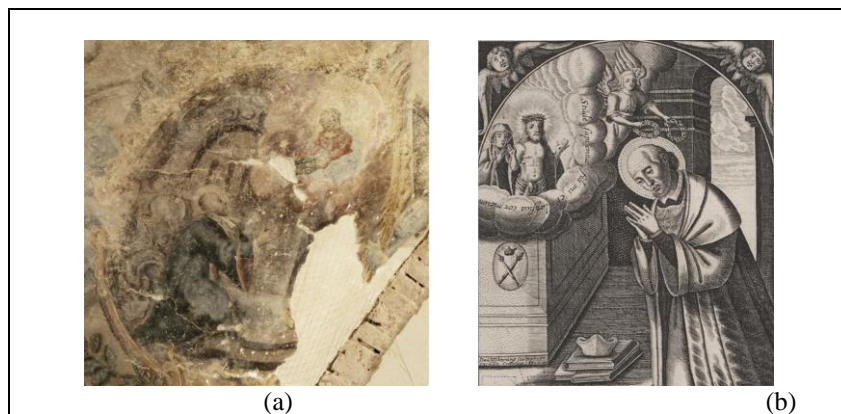
- should be one), which is the beginning of the tradition of an empty place setting at the Christmas Eve table (Figure 7).
- 4) The scene of the revelation, which happened during John's lifetime. John can be seen kneeling before the figure of the Virgin Mary, who holds a laurel wreath in her hands. Compared to another representation of this scene, the additional rose wreath symbolising love, the victory of the spiritual elements [32] (which is depicted above the medallion) as well as Jesus accompanying his mother are missing (Figure 8).
  - 6) The scene of gluing of a jug. The scene depicts John (during his lifetime) in a professorial robe, with a figure of a kneeling woman in front of him and a jug lying on the ground from which milk is spilling. In this scene, the artist depicted spilt milk and not a broken jug, which can even be interpreted as a new scene from the life of the saint or some over-interpretation on the part of the artist (Figure 9).
  - 7) The scene showing John on his deathbed surrounded by four people. Additionally, a flying demon in the form of a swallow is visible. The characters are looking in different directions but they should be looking at the flying demon (Figure 10).
  - 8) The scene is almost entirely lost, only a small part of professor's toga is visible.
  - 9) The scene depicts a figure with a cross in his hand against the background of burning buildings. It is most probably a scene of the fire of Saint Anne's Street in Krakow and crying John, who was supposed to suppress the spreading flames with a prayer. Tscherning additionally included in the scene of the fire the figure of Saint Stanislaus (Figure 11).
  - 10) Only the upper part of the figure of the saint (during his lifetime) in a toga with his left hand raised as if in a gesture of blessing is visible on the stage. The rest of the scene has been completely destroyed (Figure 12).
  - 11) The scene depicts one of John's discourses or lectures attended by five people (two in professorial togas). Usually, this scene showed not five, but a dozen people concentrated on Cantius' speech (Figure 13).
  - 12) The scene is heavily degraded and unreadable for the time being.
  - 13) The scene is destroyed, only a fragment of a face that doesn't belong to the saint survives.
  - 14) The scene depicts a woman holding most probably a cloak. The representation is very illegible and damaged but one can guess that it is a scene of John covering a poor man with his cloak or a scene when, according to the legend, the Virgin Mary returns the cloak to him (Figure 14).
  - 15) The scene above the entrance door - badly damaged. It is possible that fragments of two figures have survived.



**Figure 6.** The scene depicting the healing (1) „Iumenta duo morientia emisso pro eis voto sanat”: a) the Zamoyski Academy mid. 18<sup>th</sup> century, photo of K. Janus, 2021; b) David Tscherning, 1645.



**Figure 7.** The scene depicting the feeding of a poor (3) „Frustum carnis datum pauperi stupentibus commensalibus, calitus recipit”: (a) the Zamoyski Academy mid. 18<sup>th</sup> century, photo of K. Janus, 2021; (b) David Tscherning, 1645.



**Figure 8.** The scene of revelation of the Holy Mary (4) „Virgilis auxilium”: (a) the Zamoyski Academy mid. 18<sup>th</sup> century, photo of K. Janus, 2021; (b) David Tscherning, 1645.





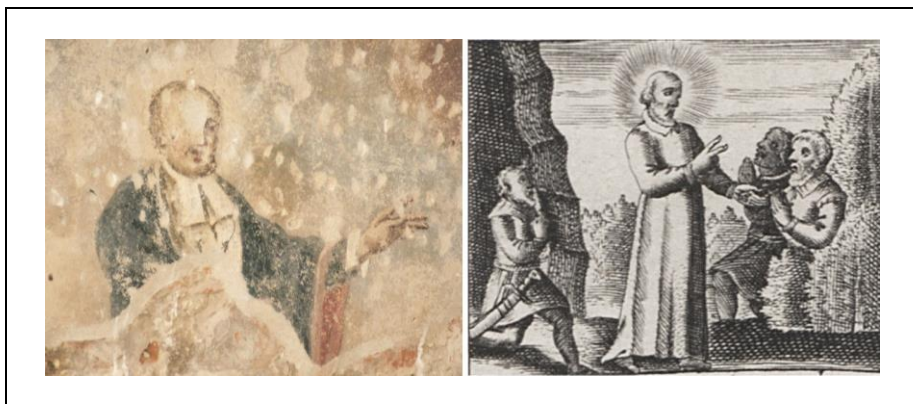
**Figure 9.** The broken jug (6) „Vas fictile, lacte pleraim, casu fractum, ploranti mulieri redintegrat”: (a) the Zamoyski Academy mid. 18<sup>th</sup> century, photo of K. Janus, 2021; (b) David Tscherning, 1645.



**Figure 10.** John Cantius on his deathbed (7) „Demonicum, mortuus liberat”: (a) the Zamoyski Academy mid. 18<sup>th</sup> century, photo of K. Janus, 2021; (b) David Tscherning, 1645.



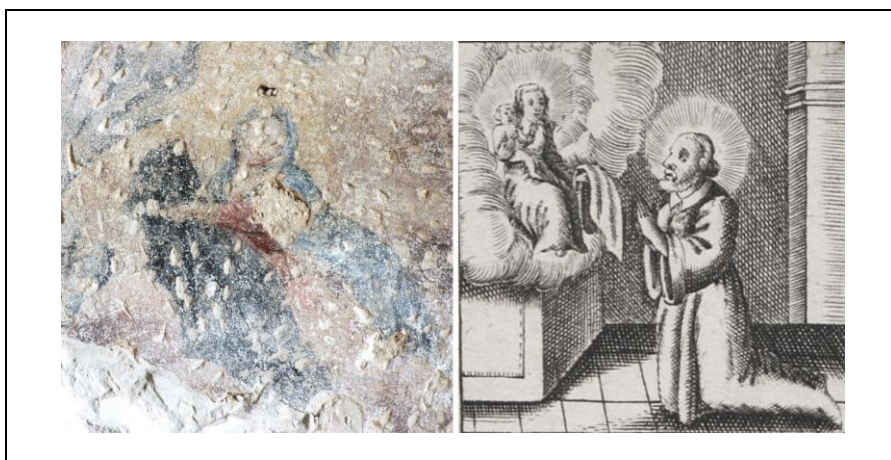
**Figure 11.** The scene depicting the fire of Saint Anne street in Kraków (9) „Saniente igne in platea S. Anna, iubet cum D. Stanislaus securo esse animum”: (a) the Zamoyski Academy mid. 18<sup>th</sup> century, photo of K. Janus, 2021; (b) David Tscherning, 1645.



**Figure 12.** The scene (10) „Latronibus auzeos restituens, eosdem mouet adpanitententiam”: (a) the Zamoyski Academy mid. 18<sup>th</sup> century, photo of K. Janus, 2021; (b) David Tscherning, 1645.



**Figure 13.** The scene depicting the lecture (11) „Romae solennitez de peregrinatione disputat”: (a) the Zamoyski Academy mid. 18<sup>th</sup> century, photo of K. Janus, 2021; (b) David Tscherning, 1645.



**Figure 14.** The scene (14) „Domi Oranti, Virgo Depra ueftem donatam pauperi, restitut”: (a) the Zamoyski Academy mid. 18<sup>th</sup> century, photo of K. Janus, 2021; (b) David Tscherning, 1645.

## **7. Conclusions**

The depiction of saints in painting or sculpture was, on the one hand, a reinforcement of veneration by visualising their commemoration. On the other hand, immortalisation was not only a form of artistic expression for the glory of the Lord, but also a permanent record, a constant reminder of the saint's presence. The polychrome decorations unveiled in 2020 depicting scenes from the life of Saint John Cantius were created in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century by a painter working for the Zamość Entail. The paintings survived through centuries, changes of owners and functions, renovations, reconstructions, cataclysms and fires, and although destroyed, are still in remarkably good condition. Originally, they occupied the whole surface of the walls and vault, which was specially made for this purpose. The painting was created to commemorate the saint for the occasion of the preparation of his canonisation process. Eight fully legible scenes and four fragmentary ones have survived to the present day. The author of the paintings may have been Jan Kanty Siarczyński, who executed it in the then fashionable illusionist frame. The painting depicts the figure of Saint John Cantius in various periods of his life, from his youth to old age, his death and after death, when he revealed himself performing miracles. He is always depicted in a professorial or rector's toga and, depending on his age, with or without a beard - which is identical with other representations of him [33]. Based on comparative analysis, it may be concluded that the Zamość version of the painting commemorates the life of John Cantius without any doubt and was created on the basis of *David Tscherning's* model but in a mirror image. Although only eight legible scenes have survived, due to research it is possible to identify ten missing ones (plundering by robbers, covering with a cloak, expulsion of a demon, conversion of robbers, and six scenes of healing from various diseases). The scenes in Zamość are slightly different from other known representations, but they do not create a new history. It is possible that they were intentional or that the artist was not fully acquainted with the saint's biography. Although the main place of worship of the saint is in the University Collegiate Church of Saint Anne in Kraków, where he was buried, honoured with a sarcophagus, a magnificent head reliquary [34], numerous paintings, etc., the Zamość commemoration is the largest. The creation of the decorations is connected with the growing cult of the saint in the process before his beatification. Saint John has been the patron of the Zamoyski Academy since 1702 and of Poland and Lithuania since 1737. The cyclical celebrations of his feast day turned into an indulgence or even a festival in his honour. Hence, the monumental commemoration of his person was a priority for the academic Zamość. The cult of Saint John Cantius waned considerably during the period of partitions and communism, but perhaps his figure emerging from under the Academy's plaster walls will remind the local community of him, his popularity and respect he enjoyed.

The purpose of the polychrome wall painting of the Zamojska Academy was to visually present the achievements of Saint John Cantius. The scenes of miracles and deeds were also an encouragement to a pious life and a monument to a person who was so special to the professors and alumni of the Academy. Thanks to the research and analysis of the collected material, it was possible to identify missing scenes from the life of the saint and, consequently, make an attempt to reconstruct them. This would make it possible to fully restore the painting in the form of a teaching from the life of the saint.

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