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**Salvation in Angevin Hungary:
The Iconography of the *Scala Salutis* on the
Fourteenth Century Wall Painting of Želiezovce**

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by

Krisztina Ilko

(Hungary)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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External Reader

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External Supervisor

I, the undersigned, **Krisztina Ilko**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to place the wall painting (c. 1388) of the St James Church in Želiezovce (Slovakia) into a broader iconographical context. The fresco depicts a debate for the soul of the dying knight György Becsei between the Devil, the Virgin Mary, Christ, the Father, and the angels. Earlier scholarship suggested that the subject of the fresco was formed only around the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth century, and came to Hungary from German or Czech territories.

I contribute research on the wall painting of Želiezovce by researching its historical, theological, and art historical aspects. With the help of unpublished archival sources I have contextualized the history of the town, its landlords, and the church in the fourteenth century. My observations on the architectural history of the church and its wall paintings are based on personal observations, since I was contributing to the art historical researches which were going on alongside the restoration research which started in the summer of 2014. I was focusing on the visual sources and analogies of the fresco with the help of comparative iconography.

The goal of the thesis is to demonstrate the existence of the *Scala Salutis* as an independent iconographical type beginning with its first monumental piece, the wall painting in Želiezovce. I collected sixteen pictorial and nine textual examples which form the basis of this study. In debate with the earlier scholarship I localize the origins of the iconographical type to the first part of the fourteenth century in western Europe, probably in France. I connect its spread with the popularity of the topic depicted, emphasized by the *visio beatifica* debate which began in the 1330s.

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List of Abbreviations

ANB	Archív Nitrianskeho biskupstva [Archive of the Bishopric of Nitra]
APÚ	Archív Pamiatkového úradu [Archive of the Office of National Monuments], Bratislava
DL	Diplomatikai Levéltár [Diplomatic Archive]
FKI	Forster Központ, Irattár [Forster Center, Archive]
FKT	Forster Központ, Tervtár [Forster Center, Ground Plan Archive]

Enigma on the wall

Introduction to the wall painting of Želiezovce

What happens with the soul of the dying knight? An enigmatic wall painting (Fig. 2) in the St James Church in Želiezovce (Zseliz) depicts the unusual scene of a trial between the Devil and the Saints for the salvation of a dying man. The red and ugly Devil himself appears on the painting and tries to seize the soul which is leaving the tortured body in the form of a small person. This little soul asks for help in the very moment of death, and an angel narrates the story to us. The intercession of the heavenly powers works as a complex set of legal proceedings: the double intercession of the Virgin Mary and Christ seek the mercy of the Father. Their appeal is also supported by an enigmatic saint who is wearing a brown habit, like a monk, but without any further attributes and is squatting in a strange position.

Moreover this spectacular art piece represents the only fourteenth-century wall painting from the Hungarian kingdom where an identifiable but non-royal person is depicted.¹ A short inscription informs us about the patron of the fresco: “On behalf of her father, his daughter Margit (had it made), in honor of her father”.² With the help of this information we can identify the dying knight in the painting as György Becsei (Fig.19), one of the greatest landlords of the Hungarian kingdom, and a courtier with notable positions and titles. György fought in the Italian campaign of King Louis of Hungary. There is still preserved a nicely-carved late antique sarcophagus standing as the main altar of the St Jacob church which we can connect to his person. He traveled home from Italy with rich spoils, but when the royal army was dismissed in Buda, he put the treasures in the sarcophagus to bring them to Želiezovce safely.

¹ We can also identify the self-portrait of the painter Johannes Aquila in the wall painting of the church in Mártonhely.

² “Pro patre margarita filia in honorem patris.”

Beside this adventurous story György's person is also preserved in the chronicles. During the campaign he received the duty to decapitate Duke Charles I of Durazzo who the king accused of taking part in the plot against his brother. Then he defenestrated the corpse without honor. Thereupon György had every reason to take account of his conscience at the end of his life. This is what is represented on this puzzling wall painting: he has to give account of his sins and his benefactions. Thereafter it is the task of the celestial powers to put these things on the scale to measure them and decide whether he will go to heaven or to hell.

But it is more than that. This wall painting tells us more than just a story about the fate of a single knight. It enlightens us about contemporary theological perspectives and debates. While from the time of the first church fathers there were several explanations about how heaven, hell and purgatory should look, the way the soul got to these places remained ambiguous. Surprisingly, until the fourteenth century in Western Christendom there was no official ecclesiastical consensus about whether after death the soul can directly go to heaven and see God, or has to wait until the Last Judgment. The question about this fastidious and uncomfortable topic somehow remained obscure. The big turn came only with the *opinio* of Pope John XXII (1316–1334) who argued that even the saints cannot obtain the *visio beatifica*, the seeing of God face to face before the Last Judgment. Shortly after that his own successor, Pope Benedict XII (1334–1342), denied the proposition in the papal constitution named after its beginning, *Benedictus Deus*. The wall painting of Želiezovce takes a stand on this latter constitution. It confirms that the current theological questions reached the Hungarian kingdom in only a few decades, if not faster.

Moreover this wall painting informs us in a spectacular manner how people imagined salvation in Angevin Hungary. We have to emphasize the importance of this fresco, since only a few sources are preserved on these ideas. Nearly the only comparable piece is the legend of the knight György, son of Krisafan, who also fought in the Italian campaign of Louis, then in

search of penitence travelled to Ireland and descended into the purgatory of St Patrick. His visions about the afterlife are preserved in a description by an Irish monk and on some points also reflect current theological issues, which show us something about lay interest in the afterlife. However, while a painting can inform us in a different form than descriptions do, we should not underrate the significance of the Želiezovce piece. Moreover, the complexity of the fresco is sharpened thanks to its inscriptions. It is extremely fortunate, especially if considered in regard to the circumstance in the Hungarian kingdom that we think about how fragmentary and unreadable most preserved inscriptions from the Middle Ages are. But can we find any analogies for them? As we will see, these texts offer us the best starting point to research this wall painting not just in the frame of the Hungarian kingdom, but in a broader European context.

Questions raised by the wall painting

The focal point of this thesis is the iconography of the previously-described wall painting in Želiezovce. As I see it, this picture shares close similarities with a group of other images from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, from which an iconographical type can be created. The aim of my research is to reconstruct and analyze this picture type and demonstrate its validity as an independent category.

The goal of this task is substantial, since in the historiography only five from these pictures have already been connected with the Želiezovce piece, and no one has yet declared them to be an independent iconographical type.

This fresco can be described as a *particular judgment*, as Antal Lepold (1880–1971) declared it. He wrote the first careful scholarly publication on this wall painting in 1941.³ This became its standard name in later historiography.⁴ Noticing that the inscriptions of wall painting are close to the textual description of a Particular Judgment, the literary historian Tibor

³ Lepold Antal, “Becsei György megítélése: A Želiezovcei templom falfestményének magyarázata” (The Judgment of György Becsei: The interpretation of the wall painting of the church in seliz), *Szépművészet* 2, no. 1 (1941): 64–66. The first serious scholarly work on the wall paintings of Želiezovce was written in 1941 by Antal Lepold (1880–1971), a priest and canon, and art historian of the Christian Museum in Esztergom. He identified the dying man with György Becsei, and first referred to the fresco as Particular Judgment, which became its common name in later historiography. Lepold dated the wall painting to after 1388. He separated the wall paintings in the church into two groups, and attributed the *Imago Pietatis* and the still-existing SS Barbara and Apollonia to an Italian master, and the remains – including the *Scala Salutis* – to a Byzantising painter.

⁴ As in Tünde Wehli, “Tematikai és ikonográfiai jelenségek,” (Thematic and Iconographic Phenomena), in *Magyarországi művészet 1300–1470 körül* (Hungarian Art around 1300–1470), ed. Ernő Marosi (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1987), 190, etc. Since in my thesis I will focus on the iconography of the picture here I offer a brief outline on the historiography of the painting in general. The first note about the existence of the wall painting of Želiezovce was written in the same year as its discovery in 1884 by Imre Henszlmann, “A Műemlékek Országos Bizottsága 1884. évi október hó 18-án tartott rendes ülésének jegyzőkönyve,” (The Report of the regular sitting of the Committee of National Monuments on 18th October 1884), *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 4 (1884), 6. Another article from the same year by an anonymous writer noted the inscriptions on the painting and tried to transcribe them with modest success.⁴ The article was originally published in the journal *Magyar Állam* in 1884 (nos 20 and 24) and then republished in: *Egyházművészeti Lapok* (1884), 212–14. In the national register about monuments in 1905 the subject of the *Scala Salutis* fresco was mistakenly identified as “The Death of a Female Saint”. Péter Gerecse, *A Műemlékek Országos Bizottsága rajztárának jegyzéke* (The Register of the Drawings of the Committee of the National Monuments), Magyarország Műemlékei 1 (Budapest: Hornyánszky Viktor Császári és Királyi Udvari Könyvnyomdája, 1905), 222; Péter Gerecse, *A műemlékek helyrajzi jegyzéke és irodalma* (The Topographical Register and Historiography of National Monuments), Magyarország Műemlékei 2 (Budapest: Hornyánszky Viktor Császári és Királyi Udvari Könyvnyomdája, 1906), 164. Radocsay in his Hungarian medieval fresco corpus connected the wall paintings of Želiezovce with Csaroda. Dénes Radocsay, *A középkori Magyarország falképei* (Wall Paintings of Medieval Hungary) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1954), 240. Dénes Radocsay, *Falképek a középkori Magyarországon* (Wall Paintings in Medieval Hungary) (Budapest: Corvina, 1977), 178–79. However, Géza Entz argued that they were executed in a much more provincial style. Géza Entz, “A csarodai templom” (The Church in Csaroda), *Művészettörténeti Értesítő* 4 (1955): 212. Gerevich maintained that the frescoes were made under the influence of altar paintings. Despite this, Dvořáková again connected them with monumental art, and suggested that they were similar to the wall paintings of Sazdice (Sázdd). She was convinced that the *Scala Salutis* was painted in the provincial manner of Italian art. She supposed that the painter studied in northern Italy, probably in the workshop of Nicola di Tommaso. Vlasta Dvořáková, “Talianske vývinové prúdy stredovekej nástennej mal’by na Slovensku” (Italian Artistic Manners in Wall Paintings in Slovakia), in *Zo starších výtvarných dejín Slovenska* (The History of Old Art in Slovakia), ed. Marian Váross (Bratislava, without publisher, 1965), 94, Vlasta Dvořáková, “Želiezovce,” in *Středověká nástěnná malba na Slovensku*, (Medieval Wall Painting in Slovakia), ed. Vlasta Dvořáková, Josef Krása and Karel Stejskal (Prague: Odeon, 1978), 181. János Vég, who has written the hitherto most detailed iconographic analysis of the fresco also dated it to the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth century, and called attention to the similarity of the face of the Virgin Mary to the frescoes in the Church of St Margaret in Mediaș (Medgyes). János Vég, “Az olaszszal keveredő cseh hatás a 14. és 15. század fordulóján” (The Influence of Italian and Czech Style between the 14th and 15th Centuries), in *Magyarországi művészet 1300–1470 körül* (Hungarian Art around 1300–1470), ed. Ernő Marosi, 1:607 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1987). In opposition with Vég, Togner dated it to the 1380s, along with all the frescoes of the apse. Milan Togner, *Středověká nástěnná malba na Slovensku* (Medieval wall painting in Slovakia) (Bratislava: Autor, 1988), 117. Beside the stylistic question its unique iconography has also attracted the attention of art historians. Ilona Berkovits emphasized that it was created under the influence of mystery plays. Ilona Berkovits, “Rec. Radocsay Dénes: A középkori Magyarország falképei, Budapest, 1954 (Dénes Radocsay: The Wall Paintings of Medieval Hungary),” *Századok* 87 (1954): 689–91, 961.

Kardos connected it with the Codex Bod (c. 1500–1525).⁵ An even closer textual analogy in a fifteenth century codex was discovered by Flóris Szabó.⁶ In his opinion the latter-mentioned text probably originated in the thirteenth century.

Turning back to art historical research, a brief analysis of its iconography shows that the picture contains the intercession of the Virgin Mary and her Son. For this reason in the Kirschbaum iconographical lexicon it can be found under the following subgroup of the intercession pictures: “Intercession combined with deathbed and with Last Judgment”.⁷ In this article Dieter Knoepplin mentioned the fresco of the St James church as the first known image of this subgroup and connected it with pictures such as the illumination of the Book of Hours of Catherine Clèves, and others, which today we would rather describe as Particular Judgments. These paintings show the death of an individual and their common feature is the intercession of any one of a variety of saints, and Mary or Christ before the Father. Going beyond this article János Végő wrote a notable publication concentrating solely on the painting of Želiezovce, which is still the most detailed analysis of this picture.⁸ He claimed that the strongest analogies of the fresco are the following: the Heilbronn epitaph, an illuminated initial from Cracow, the wall painting of the cloister of the St Catherine Church in Cracow, and an illumination from the Rhineland.⁹ Reflecting to this list in advance, in my thesis I will not include out the Heilbronn epitaph as a more distant analogy of Želiezovce in my analysis because its inscriptions do not have the same text. Végő also argued that the subject of the fresco of the St

⁵ Tibor Kardos and Tekla Dömötör, *Régi magyar drámai emlékeink* (Old Hungarian Dramas), vol. 1. 2 vols. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1960), 464.

⁶ Flóris Szabó, “Források kódexeink halálszövegeihez,” (Sources for Death-Related Passages in Hungarian Codices) *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, (1964): 689.

⁷ *Kombinierte Interzession beim Sterben u. beim Weltgericht*. Dieter Knoepplin, “Interzession,” ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum, *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* (Rome; Freiburg; Basel; Vienna: Herder, 1970), 320.

⁸ János Végő, “Becsei Vesszős György különitélete: Egy ritka ikonográfiai típus magyarországi előfordulása,” (The Particular Judgment of György Becsei Vesszős: The Occurrence of a Rare Iconographical Type in Hungary) in *Eszmetörténeti tanulmányok a magyar középkorról* (Cultural Historical Studies on Hungarian Middle Ages), ed. György Székely, *Memoria Saeculorum Hungariae* 4. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1984), 373–85. János Végő, “The Particular Judgment of a Courtier: A Hungarian Fresco of a Rare Iconographical Type,” *Arte Cristiana* 74 (1986): 303–14.

⁹ Végő, “The Particular Judgment of a Courtier,” 1986, 303.

James church was a reflection of the opinion of Pope John XXII. The second pope of Avignon was a difficult person who confronted The Holy Roman Emperor Louis IV of Bavaria and opposed the radical concept of poverty of the Franciscan spirituals. As a result he gained many opponents who were eager to try to contradict the Holy Father. In conclusion Véggh attributes the subject of the wall painting in Želiezovce as a visual denial of the opinion that the pope held in opposition to the *visio beatifica*. In his view this reflection was born only around the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth century, some two generations after the papacy of John XXII.¹⁰ He argued that the subject was formed in the Upper Rhineland, which is easily reached both from Hungary and Poland.¹¹

The next and most recent publication on the topic is the research of Dušan Buran from 2002, who connected the wall painting of Želiezovce with the fresco of another Slovakian monument, the St Francis of Assisi church in Poniky (Pónik).¹² As their closest analogies he listed the aforementioned miniature from the Rhineland, the wall painting in the cloister of the St Catherine's church in Cracow, and an illumination from there as well, and expanded upon Véggh's list with the Casanatense compendium.¹³ This latter manuscript is strongly connected with the manuscript of the Wellcome Library. Clifton Old and Fritz Saxl already argued that the model of the Wellcome and Casanatense codices was a so-called "spiritual encyclopaedia" from the beginning of the fifteenth century and which originated in southern Germany or in the Rhineland.¹⁴ This research was the basis of Buran's idea, and he suggested the existence of a yet-unidentified fifteenth-century codex illumination, which originated from the Czech lands

¹⁰ Ibidem 307.

¹¹ Ibidem 309.

¹² Dušan Buran, *Studien zur Wandmalerei um 1400 in der Slowakei: Die Pfarrkirche St. Jakob in Leutschau und die Pfarrkirche St. Franziskus Seraphicus in Poniky* (Weimar: VDG, 2002), 137-43.

¹³ Ibidem 139-40.

¹⁴ Fritz Saxl, "A Spiritual Encyclopaedia of the Later Middle Ages," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942): 98. Clifton C Olds, "Ars Moriendi: A Study of the Form and Content of Fifteenth-Century Illustrations of the Art of Dying," (doctoral thesis, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania, 1966), 57, 112, 127.

or from Saxony and which served as the mediating material through which the subject reached the Hungarian kingdom.

Arguing both with Végh and Buran I will try to prove that the subject of the wall painting of Želiezovce was already developed in the first part of the fourteenth century. Another important question is the probability that the image type arrived from the Rhineland or the Czech lands to Hungary, as Végh and Buran suggested. Observing the preserved examples, in my view, it is not so evident that we really have to deal with a topic focused only on Central Europe, but rather with the opposite.

I will base my argumentation on a selected group of images, which in my view shares enough similarities to declare them as an independent iconographical type. However this group can surely be expanded, and up to now I have found fifteen miniatures and wall paintings which fulfil the criteria. All of them depict a deathbed scene, where the Devil claims the soul for himself, but also where Mary and Jesus are procuring a double intercession on behalf of the dying person before the Father. Beside them a varying number of angels and most often a saint show up as well. All scenes are narrated with the same inscriptions, but in different languages: Latin, Old French, or Old German. These texts show such minor differences that we can be sure that they are only the varieties of the same model. These art pieces originated from France, Hungary (the present Slovakian territories), England, Germany, Poland, and Italy and were made between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. These pictures are depicting Particular Judgments completed with the double intercession. It seems practical to give them a more specified title and because some of the publications titled the three Polish examples as *Scala Salutis*, I will adapt this name for the whole iconographical type.

What was the purpose of these images and what is their relevance to current scholarship? In my view they are more than just another aspect of the *ars moriendi*, the art of

the good death.¹⁵ My intention is to concentrate on the double intercessions in these images. The last few decades have brought to light many interesting aspects of the devotion shown towards the Virgin Mary, but how her dual intercession with her Son functioned has remained obscure. The *Scala Salutis* can help to reconstruct how people imagined the intercession of the saints in the late Middle Ages. How did they envisage their holy helpers? And how did they see the Devil? Expressions of the deepest fears and the highest hopes are whirling about in these wall paintings and miniatures. Moreover, these images can guide us to the medieval world of visions. This scene floats in a state of equilibrium on the border of the visions of the living and the visions of the dead. The art inspired by late medieval piety was a source of fantastic imagination, and this iconographical type can show us a new aspect of it.

The structure of the thesis

This thesis contains three large chapters. First of all I have to sketch the physical context of the *Scala Salutis* wall painting enlightening the history of the village and the church where it is situated. On the basis of the preserved charters my aim is to present three generations of the Becsei family, the landlords of Želiezovce in the fourteenth century. The village was obtained by Imre Becsei, the powerful landlord whose son György is depicted on the fresco. Even more fascinating is the life of György whose biography represents an adventurous knightly story from the Angevin Hungarian kingdom. His daughter, Margit was the donor who paid for the picture. The wall painting, as already said, is placed in the apse of the St James church. Here I will refer to the church as St James, but this is not universal in the historiography where it is also called St George. I intend to use archival sources to end the debate. I will also

¹⁵ Introduction to the *ars moriendi*: Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (London: British Museum Press, 2001), 9.

try to reconstruct the building history with a strong focus on the fourteenth century when the painting was made. The *Scala Salutis* is not the only wall painting of the medieval parish church: the *Imago Pietatis* combined with *Veronica's Veil*, and the *Saints* in the nave were painted in three different phases in the last decades of the fourteenth and the first of the fifteenth century. Since the building and its decorations were severely damaged during the Second World War I will use the preserved – and partially unpublished –archival sources and old photographs dating from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries to reconstruct the changes of the church interior and its frescoes.

In the second chapter my aim is to explore the historical and theological background of the *Scala Salutis*. We have to understand from the beginning how views were forming about what might happen to the soul after death and how this influenced conceptions of the iconography of the wall painting. I will not just offer an overview on the question of the *visio beatifica*, but also research its visual connotations which have remained obscure in historiography. In my view we can see the *Scala Salutis* as a projection of contemporary ideas about death, and hence it is closely linked with a theological milieu.

The third part of my thesis builds upon the consequences of the earlier chapters. I will reconstruct the iconographical type of the *Scala Salutis*. Despite the similarities we can observe many fascinating little details which differ in the pictures. One of the bases of my thesis will be comparative iconography. György Becsei was a man and a knight, but there are also clerics and women pictured near the dying persons. The Devil is a constant actor on the images, but always looks slightly different. The main point focuses on the group of the Virgin Mary and Christ, but even their pair varies: where are they situated, with what attributes and with what outlook? I will not only describe these alterations but raise the question of the meaning of their gestures. The most plastic person in the scene is the saint but sometimes he is entirely missing from the picture, and his depictions can also vary widely. I will use these conclusions to

discover more about the iconography of the wall painting in Želiezovce. It is not only a one-sided interest: I have to emphasize the importance of this piece between the frames of these carefully collected images. In this case we have the advantage that the dying man is a notable person and we can reconstruct his life. With this we can learn about the milieu in which these images were ordered and produced. Moreover, Želiezovce shows the first monumental representation of this iconographical type. Its iconographical peculiarities are also significant, especially the unidentified squatting monk-saint. Looking at these features Želiezovce is definitely one of the most important images of its type.

The discovery of the wall paintings

In the beginning of the eighteenth century the donation of the landlords of Želiezovce was kept in a small chest inside the St James church.¹⁶ On the early morning of 23 June 1730 the Calvinist peasants were leaving to harvest the crops on the other shore of the river Garam. At this time the financial officer, whose duty was to count the money, was János Kari, a faithful Catholic. On account of doing his duty he asked for the key of the church from the Calvinists, but was secretly planning a plot to re-convert it to the Roman Catholic Church. On the request of the Catholic citizenry Pál Darázsi, the subdeacon of Levice, and the priests Ferenc Kulcsár and Ferenc Kotucs quickly arrived to the church. They also brought with them ecclesiastical instruments, garments, and Holy Scriptures. They celebrated a Catholic mass, and the Calvinists were informed by the ringing of the bells that the church was consecrated again to the Roman Catholic faith. When they returned they could only curse the crafty Catholics.

¹⁶ KNA 5.

The new owners found only white walls in the church and since at that time St James had been in the hands of the Calvinists for a century nobody remembered that once the church had been decorated with medieval wall paintings. The Calvinists obtained the church around 1655, and probably immediately whitewashed the wall paintings of the saints.¹⁷ They remained unknown until 1884, when the local priest Sándor Rózsa found them during a renovation.¹⁸ He discovered the *Imago Pietatis*, the *Scala Salutis*, *St Barbara and Apollonia* and the *Virgin of Mercy* in the apse. In the nave he found a line of saints: a bishop, an abbot, St Martin and St Lawrence. From the frescoes, because of the building of the private chapel of the local count in 1622, the *Virgin of Mercy* was already in such a bad state of preservation that they could not save it.¹⁹ For the conservation of the rest of the paintings the priest asked Ferenc Storno.²⁰ He was one of the most well-known conservationists of the end of the nineteenth century, who often supplemented the old pictures with excessive creative liberty. In order to be able to afford the popular expert, Rózsa sought the financial support of the National Committee of National Monuments.²¹ His initial attempts were without any success. From the priest's personal finances, Storno recovered all the wall paintings as is attested by the excavation sketches of the *Imago Pietatis*, *St Barbara and Apollonia*, *St Martin and the abbot saint*, and the *Scala Salutis*.²² While earlier research agreed that he also restored these pictures, from the archival sources we can declare that he touched only the *Imago Pietatis*.²³ In reality Storno claimed 5998 Ft for the restoration of all the frescoes, so Rózsa also asked Storno's son Ferenc Jr., who gave a price of only 300 Ft. It seems that it was still too much for the priest, since he finally

¹⁷ Ibidem 3.

¹⁸ The letter of József Rózsa, 16. 08. 1884., FKI 1884/49.

¹⁹ An article by an anonymus writer informs us, that the Virgin of Marcy was in the poorest conditions, in which case there was no hope to restore. The article was published in: *Egyházművészeti Lapok* [N. n.] (1884): 213.

²⁰ Ibidem

²¹ The letter of József Rózsa, 17. 05. 1888., FKI 1888/31.

²² FKT K 8526, K 8527, K 8524, K 8525.

²³ The drapery imitation under the medieval fresco was all-in-all the makeup of Storno.

made an agreement in 1888 with János Wermes for 120 Ft and food.²⁴ This price indicates that he was not a top painter, which we can notice especially on the *Scala Salutis* (Fig.1). This wall painting suffered the most dramatic “refreshments”. We can observe that the faces of the angel on top left, the devil, and the squatting saint were totally repainted.

The frescoes of St Barbara and Apollonia (Fig.2) and the bishop-saint were destroyed in the Second World War and the rest of the wall paintings deteriorated with time, as no restoration was made in the twentieth century on the church.²⁵ A new research program was supported by the Slovakian Ministry of National Monuments and started in the summer of 2014. The conservator discovered that the *Scala Salutis* wall painting is framed with a blue and red geometrical decoration line (Fig.3). It also proved that only small fragments (Fig.4) remained from the *St Barbara and Apollonia* composition. Fragments of a previously unknown picture in the north apse (Fig.5) and renaissance decorations (Fig.6) in the nave were also discovered.²⁶ This restoration research is connected with some art historical research which I was involved with.²⁷ Peter Buday contributed the archival research, and the architectural research was done by Michaela Haviarová and Tomáš Haviar. If the request succeeds in the ministry, the conservation project will hopefully continue over the next several years.

²⁴ The letter of Józsa Rózsa, 1888. 05. 17., FKI 1888/31. The paintings and sketches of Wermes about the wall paintings: FKT K 530–533.

²⁵ Saint Lawrence was also not preserved, but we have to date its disappearance in the end of the nineteenth century. He is already not mentioned by the documentation of Wermes.

²⁶ Peter Koreň, *Návrh na reštaurovanie nástenných malieb a omietok v rímskokatolíckom kostole Sv. Jakuba v Želiezovciach* (Request for the Conservation of the Wall Paintings and Mortars in the St James’s Church in Želiezovce) (Želiezovce: Ministerstvo Kultúry Slovenskej Republiky, 2014).

²⁷ Krisztina Ilkó, “Kunsthistorická analýza” (Art Historical Analysis), in *Návrh na reštaurovanie nástenných malieb a omietok v rímskokatolíckom kostole Sv. Jakuba v Želiezovciach* (Request for the Conservation of the Wall Paintings and Mortars in the St James’s Church in Želiezovce), ed. Peter Koreň (Želiezovce: Ministerstvo Kultúry Slovenskej Republiky, 2014), 7–13.

The fresco of the St James Church in Želiezovce

Fourteenth-century Želiezovce as the center of the Becsei family

The village of Želiezovce was situated in the north-west of the Hungarian kingdom, which is today part of Slovakia. The first preserved attestation (*Selyz*) can be read in a charter from 1274.²⁸ From the same year there are mentions of the church too, which, however, was consecrated to St. George at that time.²⁹ Although the earlier historiography ignored the probability of its identification with the later Church of St James, we can clearly infer to this from its location.³⁰

At the beginning of the fourteenth century, after the turbulent period of devastation of the vicinity by the oligarch Máté Csák and with the extinction of the family of the former landowners, the Becsei family appeared as the new landlords of Želiezovce. They made the

²⁸ DL 86839, 1274. 06. 24. We can suspect on the base of the names Bény and Lampert that the family originated from the Hont-Pázmány kindred. János Karácsonyi, *A magyar nemzetségek a XIV. század közepéig* (Hungarian Families until the Middle of the 14th Century), vol. 2. 3 vols. (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1901), 198, György Györffy, *Az Árpád-kori Magyarország történeti földrajza* (The Historical Geography of Hungary in the Arpad Era), vol. 1. 4 vols. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1987), 488. Despite the lack of sources Püspöki Nagy identified its first mention with the village Celiza in the foundation charter of the Benedictine abbey in Hronský Beňadik from the reign of Géza I (1074–1077). Péter Püspöki Nagy, *Želiezovce város címere* (The Coat of Arms of the Town of Želiezovce) (Bratislava: Madách, 1976), 64. The author proceeded from the interpretation of Knauz, who identified another similar-sounding village name: Seliche with Želiezovce. Nándor Knauz, *A Garam melletti Szent-Benedeki apátság* (The Benedictine Monastery near the Garam River) (Budapest: Esztergomi Főképtalan, 1890), 165. It seems that this supposition emerged in the early modern period, when an inscription was painted on the wall, as recorded in 1779: ANB Dominium Želiezovce, Fasc. 64 *Canonica visitatio* 1779 1396. “A : M : D : G/ Et Sancti Jamesi Apostoli majoris Honorem, Ecclesia haec est/ erecta ab Atta Secundo Palatino Regni Hungariae Anno/ Domini 1081o ab Helveticis Autoritate Dominali recepta,/ 1730o Pia tandem Benefactorum operenovata 1736.” This version of the foundation can be found in other historical works too, popularised by the humanist chronicle writer Antonio Bonfini in the fifteenth century who also identified it with the Church of St James in Želiezovce. Lajos Némethy, *Series parochiarum et parochorum Archi-dioecesis Strigoniensis* (Esztergom: Gustav Buzárovits, 1894), 322–23. István Katona also dated the foundation of the church to the eleventh century, but assumed that the founders were the Hungarian princes returning from the Carinthian war. István Katona, *Historia critica Regum Hungariae Stirpis Arpadianae*, vol. 2 (Budapest: Weingand, 1779), 220.

²⁹ DL 86841, 1274.09. 15. The church is mentioned in the following charter too, but without its *patrocinium*: DL 89235, [w. d.]. “ante fores ecclesie de Selyz”; and in the Papal Records from 1332–1337: László Fejérfatay, *Rationes collectorum pontificorum in Hungaria*, Monumenta Vaticana 1 (Budapest, 1887), 190.

³⁰ The village was divided into two parts by the two landlords, and the church was settled in the direction of Syke, owned by a Comes Been, which could fit the location of the actual Church of St James. The part owned by James, son of Lampert was north of Garammíkola.

village the center of their lordship, which brought about the heyday of Želiezovce: it was raised to the rank of market town (*oppidum*) in the beginning of the fifteenth century. The ancestor of the family was Imre Becsei (?–1333/4), who had Sebe, the daughter of the rebel Felicián Zách, decapitated in the market of Levice (Léva), as can be read in the *Illuminated Chronicle* (*Chronicon Pictum*).³¹ Despite being born into a provincial noble family, Imre quickly climbed the social ladder and in 1322 became the lord-lieutenant of the county of Bars and was made castellan of Levice.³²

His three sons: Tamás, György Vesszős (Wezzeus), and István Töttös (Thuteus) received Želiezovce from King Louis the Great in 1347.³³ After the death of their father, György, who was depicted on the fresco, and István initially had the same titles as him: castellan of Levice and lord-lieutenant in Bars. They became the members of the royal bodyguard (*aule regie miles*) and master of doorkeepers (*janitorum regalium magister*).³⁴ György also received the title of castellan of Šášov (Saskő), and in 1346–1347 – at the time when they were granted Želiezovce –, both he and Stephen became castellans of Visegrád, an important center of the Hungarian kingdom.³⁵ He is mentioned as the ispán (*comes*) of Zvolen (Zólyom) from 1347.³⁶ In the next year György took part in the Italian campaign of Louis the Great, as he is referred to in a charter from 1348.³⁷ He became entangled in the chaotic events of the campaign. After the campaign Joanna I of Naples escaped to France and Louis captured Duke Charles I of Durazzo (1323–1348), on charges of murdering his brother, Duke Andrew of Hungary. János Kükkülle's chronicle records that György Becsei received the duty to kill

³¹ Ferenc Kubinyi, "Zách Felicián mester veje Palásthy Kopai," (Palásthy Kopai, son-in-law of Master Felicián Zách) *Századok* 21 (1887): 210–16.; SRH I. 495–496.

³² Imre Nagy, Nagy Iván and Dezső Véghely, *Codex Diplomaticus Domus Senioris Comitum Zichy de Zich et Vasonkeő*, vol. 1 (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1871), 134, 135, 152, 153, 192, 200, 202, 216, 217, 221, 222, 274, 275, 376.

³³ DL 87385, 1347. 09. 23. Transcription: 1364.

³⁴ Master of doorkeepers: DL 87216, 1344. 05. 13.

³⁵ Castellan of Saskő: DI 87109, 1340. 07. 20.; DI 87216, 1340. 11. 20.

³⁶ DI 51444, 1347. 08. 12., DI 87219, 1347. 09. 23., etc.

³⁷ Nagy et al., *Codex Diplomaticus Domus*, 292: "post reversionem magistri Wezzeus de Regno Italye" (After the return of master Wezzeus from Italy).

Charles “at that place where they murdered the innocent king Andrew, and threw his body through a window out to the garden, the Lord King decapitated the Prince of Durazzo by his soldier, Vezzeus, son of Emeric Becsei, on 23 January, and threw his corpse through the window out into the same garden without any honor.”³⁸ This means that György was not only one of the greatest landlords of Hungary, but was serving as an important figure in the court of Louis the Great.

To add more detail to the adventurous life of György, Dezső Dercsényi suggested the identification of György Becsei with the main character of the *Visiones Georgii*.³⁹ This fourteenth-century text described the legend of a knight named György, who also fought in the Italian campaign of King Louis the Great, and then traveled to Ireland to do penance for his sins in St Patrick’s Purgatory.⁴⁰ This idea became quite popular in the historiography in the second part of the twentieth century.⁴¹ However, significant arguments could be opposed to it: there is a large age-difference between the two knights, their family name is different, and it is very suspicious that the loquacious author of the *Visiones Georgii* did not mention that György killed the Prince of Durazzo.⁴² There is also no evidence that György Becsei ever travelled to

³⁸ János Kükkülle, and Anonymous Minorite, *Krónika, Chronica, De gestis Ludovici I. regis Hungarorum*, translated by László Geréb, Monumenta Hungarica 4. (Budapest: Helikon, 1960), 6.

³⁹ Dezső Dercsényi, *Nagy Lajos kora* (The Age of Louis the Great) (Budapest: Egyetemi Nyomda, 1941), 72-73. This idea was greatly propagated in the work of Péter Püspöki Nagy, who wrote the first monograph on the history of the town. Püspöki Nagy, *Želiezovce város*, 84–86. The same opinion: László Szegfű, “György, Crissafán Fia, aki megjárta a túlvilágot (György, Son of Crissafán, who has been in the Otherworld),” *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 90 (1986): 1.

⁴⁰ György Grissaphanus, *Visiones Georgii visiones quas in Purgatorio Sancti Patricii vidit Georgius miles de Ungaria A.D. MCCCLIII*, ed. Louis L. Hammerich (København: A.F. Høst & søn, 1930). In Hungarian translation: Laurentius of Tar, *Tar Lőrinc pokoljárása: Középkori magyar víziók* (The Descent of Hell of Laurentius Tar, Medieval Hungarian Visions), ed. Sándor V. Kovács (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1985).

⁴¹ This idea was greatly propagated in the work of Péter Püspöki Nagy, who wrote the first monograph on the history of the town. Püspöki Nagy, *Želiezovce város címere*, 84–86. The same opinion: László Szegfű, “György, Crissafán Fia, aki megjárta a túlvilágot,” (György, Son of Crissafán, who has been in the Otherworld) *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 90 (1986): 1.

⁴² Enikő Csukovits, “Bűn és bűnhődés: Vezeklő zárandoklatok a középkori Magyarországon,” (Crime and Punishment: Penitentiary Pilgrimages in the Medieval Hungary) *Századok* 136 (2002): 303.

Ireland. We could rather use the *Visiones Georgii* as something to compare with the wall paintings of Želiezovce as another source for the piety of medieval knighthood in Hungary.⁴³

György had four children: János, Margit, Miklós, and Tamás.⁴⁴ He died in 1364, but the fresco was probably made only after 1388, since the daughter who commissioned the fresco was not able to solve her financial problems before that time. She filed a suit against her brother, Tamás, to give her the rightful *quarta puellaris*.⁴⁵ The charter informs us of the stalling of the trial, but another document from 1391 says that by then Tamás's financial problems were solved and he could give the money to Margit.⁴⁶ However, not long after the whole branch of the family was extirpated. In 1400 the two sons of Tamás burnt the house of a landlord, then "János and Miklós, together with their five servants were slaughtered and were thrown into the fire, and they were condemned to an execution by decapitation."⁴⁷

The architectural history of the church

While the manuscripts suggest that an earlier church stood in Želiezovce, most of the present building is from the fourteenth century (Fig. 7). The polygonal apse is covered with ribbed vault (Fig. 8, 9). Between the chancel and the single nave a richly trained triumphal arch can be found. A Gothic sacristy is situated at the northern wall of the sanctuary.

Since the greater part of the nave was destroyed during World War II, it can be reconstructed only with the help of archival photographs and drawings. Based on the ground

⁴³ There are even illuminated versions of the surviving medieval copies of the text. Peter Dinzelbacher, *Himmel, Hölle, Heilige: Visionen und Kunst im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002), 102-103.

⁴⁴ More details about his children: Püspöki Nagy, *Želiezovce város címere*, 234–239, n. 132.

⁴⁵ Nagy, Nagy, Véghely, *Codex Diplomaticus Domus*, vol. 4. 362–363.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem* 440.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*. vol. 5. 567–568.; Since they were not granted mercy, they were executed in 1400. Their death is mentioned in other documents, e.g. *ibidem* 373–374, etc.

plan drawn by the Czech architect and art historian Václav Mencl in the 1930s, the single-space nave consisted of three bays (Fig.10).⁴⁸ The nave was higher than the apse, but lighted by three pointed windows, similar to those found in the chancel. From an archival photo (Fig.11) it is clearly visible that the western gallery was probably a nineteenth-century reconstruction; however, Mencl dated it to no later than 1320–1325.⁴⁹ In a letter, Sándor Rózsa made it clear that this was built to replace an anachronistic, probably baroque, gallery, which could have been preceded by the original medieval western gallery.⁵⁰ In the southern part of the nave stood a Gothic portal (Fig.12). The walls were supported outside by Gothic responds, which are still preserved around the apse.

The church can be dated to the second half of the fourteenth century on the basis of its architectural forms, as Géza Entz already suggested.⁵¹ The same apse type can be observed in many fourteenth-fifteenth-century examples, such as the monastery of Hronský Beňadik (Garamszentbenedek) or the churches of Nové Mesto nad Váhom (Vágújhely) and Krupina (Korpona).⁵² The closest analogy of the building seems to be the Church of St Nicholas in Liptovský Mikuláš (Liptószentmiklós) (Fig.13).⁵³ While Mencl, when comparing the profile of the responds (Fig.14) with those in the apse to the Church of St Stephen in Vienna, dated the church to around 1320-1325, it seems that a later construction is possible, or even more probable.⁵⁴ The profile of the capitals in the sacristy and the eastern end of the nave are decorated with leaves and masks (Fig.15). These double-row leaf decorations first appeared as

⁴⁸ APÚ Z 3638 3–4.

⁴⁹ APÚ Z 3638 3–4.

⁵⁰ Letter of Sándor Rózsa, on 16 August 1884, FKI, 1884/49.

⁵¹ This date was already proposed by Géza Entz, “Főúri építkezések,” (Aristocratic Buildings) in *Magyarországi művészet 1300–1470 körül* (Art in Hungary around 1300-1470), vol. 1, ed. Ernő Marosi (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1987), 409.

⁵² Štefan Oriško, “Hronský Beňadik: Kláštorňý kostol bývalého benediktínskeho opätstva (Monastery Church of the Benedictine Monastery),” in *Gotika* (The Gothic Style), ed. Dušan Buran (Bratislava: Slovenská národná galéria, 2003), 634.

⁵³ Bibiana Pomfyová, “Počiatky gotickej architektúry (The Beginning of Gothic Architecture),” in *Gotika* (The Gothic Style), ed. Dušan Buran (Bratislava: Slovenská národná galéria, 2003), 57.

⁵⁴ APÚ Z 3638 3.

early as the end of the thirteenth century, but in this form they only became common at the end of the fourteenth century. Two examples from modern Croatia dating from around 1400 are obvious examples for this type: the Church of St John in Novaves (Zágrábújfalú) and the Church of St Mark of Zagreb (Zágráb).⁵⁵ The *terminus ante quem* for the date is the painting of the *Scala Salutis* fresco around 1388, which suggests that the church was built in the third quarter of the fourteenth century.⁵⁶

The fresco decoration

The *Scala Salutis*

The *Scala Salutis* fresco on the south wall (Fig.16) of the apse depicts a special scene. Set in the centre is a dying man, whose soul is being exhaled out of his mouth in the form of a small child. The fresco is annotated with inscriptions, recounting what the man says: “Christ, I beg you, save me by the honor of your death” (Fig.19).⁵⁷ He must be afraid, since the Devil on the lower right side tries to acquire the lost soul, saying “I know that this soul is full of sins, like Nineveh”.⁵⁸ The red angel in the left corner stands up against the Devil (Fig.17), riposting that “this one, even if he has sinned, in the pressure of death asked for help”.⁵⁹ The kneeling Virgin Mary turns to Christ to intercede on behalf of the dying person: “Son, who has sucked this (breast), I came to pray for him”.⁶⁰ The nearly nude Christ shows his side wound in the

⁵⁵ Zorislav Horvat, “Zágráb gótikus építészete, különös tekintettel a tagozatformákra,” (The Gothic Architecture of Zagreb) in *Építészet a középkori Dél-Magyarországon* (Architecture in Medieval Southern Hungary), ed. Tibor Kollár (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2010), 44-45, 52.

⁵⁶ Entz, “Főúri építkezések,” 409.

⁵⁷ “X[riste] morte me salva tua precor te.”

⁵⁸ “Hanc animam peccato quam Ninive plenam nosco.”

⁵⁹ “Hic si peccavit nece pressa opem rogavit.”

⁶⁰ “Hanc que suxisisti fili veniam precor isti.”

intercession: “Father, see my wounds, do what my mother asks”.⁶¹ The grey-haired and long-bearded Father enthroned at the top of the picture in a *mandorla* confirms mercy for the dying man: “By your birth I give what you have asked, I will not refuse anything from you.”⁶² In the upper right corner another angel looks out from the clouds saying: “The keeper of virtues (grace) absolves the sins”.⁶³ On the right side a squatting saint wearing a brown habit points to his inscription: “Look here, Sinner, where the Son is the mediator” (Fig.18).⁶⁴ The inscription down below gives information about the order and donator of the wall painting: “On behalf of her father, his daughter Margit (made it), in honor of her father”.⁶⁵

The elegant, shallow figures of the wall painting and the bright colours attest to a type of Italianisation. The composition suggests that the painter was following a model provided by a manuscript illumination. Through the asperity of the moves and the linear handling of the forms, the simple folds of the draperies suggest a local master. Therefore the date of the fresco to around 1388 is supported not only by the documents, but by its style as well.

The *Imago Pietatis* and Veronica's Veil

On the north-east wall of the apse a Man of Sorrows (*Imago Pietatis*, *Vir dolorum*, *Schmerzensmann*) (Fig.20) image has been painted, where the dead Christ is standing in his sarcophagus, surrounded by his mother and St John the Apostle.⁶⁶ This iconographical type was firmly established in eastern icon art, but was beginning to appear in the west from the

⁶¹ “Vulnera cerne pater fac quod rogitat mea mater.”

⁶² “Nasci petito dabo quae vis nulla tibi negabo.”

⁶³ “Fomea virtutum viciis facit esse solutum.”

⁶⁴ “Aspice peccator, ubi filius est mediator.”

⁶⁵ “Pro patre margarita filia in honorem patris.”

⁶⁶ Wiltrud Mersmann, “Schmerzensmann,” in *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum (Rome: Herder, 1972), 87-95.

twelfth century onward.⁶⁷ The two basic types are when Christ stands isolated in his sarcophagus, which mainly served cultic purposes, and the so-called devotional images, which put forward the human side of Christ, and consist of wailing figures seeking compassion from the viewer.⁶⁸

The Man of Sorrows is accompanied by the representation of the *Arma Christi*, the instruments of the Passion: the two angels on the sides are holding the spear and the crown of thorns.⁶⁹ However, in the actual picture the spear is already not visible, we can observe it in a nineteenth-century copy by János Wermes (Fig.21).⁷⁰ In the upper half of the painting another two angels are holding up the Veil of Veronica, which receives special attention in the Man of Sorrows picture. Moreover here the *vera icon* functions by strengthening the Eucharistic aspect of the fresco. This reference is bolstered by the inscription between the two scenes: “this work was painted in honor of the *Corpus Christi*”.⁷¹ The spread of this iconographic type indeed was connected with the cult of the Eucharist, a feast which was initiated by Pope Urban IV in 1264.⁷² The Man of Sorrows focuses on the body of Christ and became one of the most common pictorial references to the Eucharist.⁷³ This aspect is confirmed in Želiezovce with the tabernacle located under the wall painting (Fig.22), where the Eucharist itself was kept. It may also be significant that images depicting the Man of Sorrows were sometimes connected with commemoration for a deceased person, which may have a similar purpose as that of the *Scala Salutis* fresco.⁷⁴

⁶⁷ Hans Belting, “The Man of Sorrows in Byzantium,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 34 (1981): 1–16.

⁶⁸ Bernhard Ridderbros, “The Man of Sorrows, Pictorial Images and Metamorphical Statements,” in *The Broken Body, Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture*, ed. Alasdair A. Macdonald, Bernhard Ridderbros, and Rita Schlusemann (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), 145.

⁶⁹ Engelbert Kirschbaum, “Arma Christi,” *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum (Rome: Herder, 1968), 183–87.

⁷⁰ FKT K 532.

⁷¹ “His opus fecit depingi in honorem Corporis Christi.” In general on the Corpus Christi: Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharistic in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁷² Enrico Mazza, *The Celebration of the Eucharist: The Origin of the Rite and the Development of its Interpretations*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 199–214.

⁷³ Belting, “The Man of Sorrows in Byzantium,” 127.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, n. 160.

The wall painting was signed by master Matthew.⁷⁵ His style differs from the painter of the *Scala Salutis*: the ambition of the realistic representation of feelings and robust forms with an Italianistic tendency date the picture after and by a different workshop than the commemorative fresco of György Becsei.

The saints in the nave

The line of saints painted on the south wall of the nave (Fig.23) is now partially lost. The only two preserved saintly figures stand in front of a yellow city wall. On the left side there is a monk wearing grey habit and carrying the stick of an abbot, chains, and a book. Despite the earlier scholarly identification of the monk with St Hilarius and St Gregory the Great, his attributes clearly identify him as St Leonard (?–559), the Merovingian hermit and abbot of Noblac.⁷⁶ His godfather, king Clovis gave him the privilege to liberate any slaves that he wished, which is articulated in his iconography by the chains from the fourteenth century onward.⁷⁷ On his right St Martin of Tours can be seen, who cuts his mantel and gives half of it to a beggar. This motif which shows Martin as the guardian of the poor was depicted first in the tenth century and soon became the most popular scene in his iconography.

The nineteenth-century sources mention two other saints depicted near Leonard and Martin: an unidentified bishop and Lawrence with the gridiron, the instrument of his martyrdom.⁷⁸ The presence of these four saints might suggest that the original composition could have depicted the Fourteen Holy Helpers (*Quatordecim Auxiliatores/Advocati*). This

⁷⁵ “Hoc opus fecit depingere per Matheum.”

⁷⁶ Hilarius: Dvořáková, “Želiezovce,” 1978 179.; Gregory the Great: Togner, *Stredoveká nástenná maľba na Slovensku*, 117.

⁷⁷ Josef Dünninger, “Leonhard von Noblac,” *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum. (Rome: Herder, 1974), 394-95.

⁷⁸ Lepold, “Becsei György megítélése,” 64.

image type was known from the thirteenth century onward, and became popular after the outbreak of the Black Death in 1348, when people were appealing for the help of the saints collectively.⁷⁹ On the other hand, we do not have enough evidence to prove without a doubt that the Fourteen Holy Helpers are represented here – moreover because this could have been their earliest representation and the only preserved example of a wall painting depicting this subject in the Hungarian kingdom.

The style of the fresco suggests a connection with Gemer workshops, like the one working in the church of Szentsimon in 1423. The linear style and the solid, static forms date it to the first quarter of the fifteenth century and attest to a third workshop working in Želiezovce.

⁷⁹ Klaus Guth. “Nothelfer, Vierzehn,” *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, ed. Gerhard Müller (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter., 1994), 661-62.

Life and death in the medieval mind

The historical and theological context of the *Scala Salutis*

The history of the judgment of the soul

“From all the terrible things the death of the body is the most terrible” is a statement that can be read on the page before the *Scala Salutis* text in the late fourteenth-century manuscript in the Peterborough Library.⁸⁰ But beside the pain nothing was certain about what will happen after death in the mind of medieval people. Surprisingly, until the fourteenth century nothing was settled dogmatically about the fate of the soul between death and the Last Judgment. Where will the soul stay after death? Can deceased men see God and the saints or do they have to wait until the Final Judgment? To understand this confusion I will shortly introduce here the different ideas which arose prior to the fourteenth century.

The starting point of this confusion is that it is not clear from the Bible when the souls will be judged. We can read that everything will depend on the Last Judgment, which will happen with the second coming of Christ.⁸¹ But at another point the Bible claims that souls are judged immediately and individually at the moment of death.⁸² From these two ideas the first one was always more popular, as indicated by both the theological writings and the visual representations. However, the other idea appeared from time to time as well. In the *vita* of St Martin of Tours by Sulpicius Severus (363–425) when the saint felt that he was going to die he sent everybody away. When he was alone, next to his bed the Devil appeared to seize his soul.

⁸⁰ “Cum omnium terribilium mors corporis terribilissima sit.” Montague Rhodes James, *Lists of Manuscripts Formerly in Peterborough Abbey Library* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 8.

⁸¹ Matthew 25, Revelation 20.

⁸² Luke 16:19-31 and 23:43.

The last words of Martin were his defense against the evil powers: “What are you standing here for, cruel beast? You wicked one, you will find nothing in me.”⁸³

Another question connected with the individual judgment is the relation of Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory.⁸⁴ This depended on the acts a person committed in his life: if he lived a blameless existence his soul could reach Heaven, or if he lived a sinful life he could go to Hell, or reach Heaven after some intermediate suffering in Purgatory. However, these ideas were malleable in the medieval imagination. On one hand we see the idea of a place for the purging of sins from the time of the church fathers, but the place named Purgatory appears only from the twelfth century on.⁸⁵ The notion that souls can receive punishment is predicated upon getting a judgment for their sins and virtues immediately after death. Gregory the Great (590–604) not only described the possibility of a judgment prior to the Last Judgment for minor sins, but emphasized the intervening power of the memorial masses on behalf of the dead.⁸⁶ One of his most plausible examples is the case of Justus, an avaricious monk from his own monastery, for whom Gregory did not provide a proper burial, and let him do penance for his sins for thirty days, but then celebrated masses for him. These offerings made Justus to escape from his tortures.

As time passed and Christ failed to reappear, the distance between the present time and the Final Judgment grew farther apart in the people’s eyes. This tendency motivated them to deal with private judgment after death more thoroughly. Therefore it is not surprising that from the twelfth century the question received more attention. The idea of *judicium* directly after death was emphasized in the works of Peter Abelard (1079–1142), but also in Richard of

⁸³ “Haec locutus, diabolum vidit prope assistere. Quid hic, inquit, astas, cruenta bestia? Nihil in me, funeste, reperies.” PL 20 182-183.

⁸⁴ A good introduction and bibliographical overview on the topic: Peter Jezler, *Himmel Hölle Fegefeuer: Das Jenseits Im Mittelalter* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1994).

⁸⁵ On the history of the Purgatory: Isabella Moreira, *Heaven’s Purge: Purgatory in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). About the twelfth-century appearance of Purgatory: Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Scholar Press, 1984), 3.

⁸⁶ Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, 88-93.

Melun, Hugh of St Victor (1096–1141), and Richard of St Victor (c. 1000–1162).⁸⁷ It seemed that the debate might stop with the opinion of Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274).⁸⁸ He separated the judgments into two: the one immediately after death, and the Last Judgment which is the final one.⁸⁹ The first was concerned only about the soul, while the second sentenced both the soul and the body. His basis for the possibility of the judgment immediately after death was that the fate of the soul is dependent upon the acts of the person when he was still alive. This view was accepted by many other leading theological thinkers of the time, such as Albertus Magnus and Bonaventura of Bagnoreggio.

The debate of the *visio beatifica*

The apex of the discourse on the individual judgment of the soul came in the 1330s with the so-called “*visio beatifica* debate.”⁹⁰ It was raised by the third Avignonese Pope John XXII, who directly proposed that no one shall see God face to face before the Last Judgment. In other words not even the sinless saints, or the souls who were already purged from their mistakes in Purgatory can share in the *visio beatifica*, the vision of Paradise.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Jérôme Baschet, *Les justices de l’au-delà: Les représentations de l’enfer en France et en Italie, XIIIe-XVe siècle* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1993), 159-203.

⁸⁸ Jean Rivière, “Le Jugement Particulier,” ed. Alfred Vacant and Eugène Magenot, *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1924), 1804-1811.

⁸⁹ Susanne Wegmann, *Auf dem Weg zum Himmel: Das Fegefeuer in der deutschen Kunst des Mittelalters* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2003), 154.

⁹⁰ The main work on the *visio beatifica*: Christian Trottman, *La vision béatifique: Des disputes scolastiques à sa définition par Benoît XII* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1995).

⁹¹ A brief definition and abstract on the *visio beatifica*: Louis Duval-Arnauld, “John XXII,” ed. Philippe Levillain, *The Papacy: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 850.

The statement of the pope, however, was only an opinion (*opinio*).⁹² He first propagated it in his sermons between November 1331 and May 1334.⁹³ Moreover, he asked theologians to share their ideas on the possibility of the *visio beatifica* after death. With this act he raised one of the most extensive theological debates of the fourteenth century. Numerous important thinkers and theologians were eager to take this challenge, and moreover to contradict him. However, it seems, that the debate was more than only a simple theological disputation and had a political dimension. The difficult personality of John XXII gained him several opponents during his papacy. He already acquired reproof with his unbridled nepotism, but more importantly confronted both the Holy Roman Emperor Louis IV of Bavaria and opposed the concept of total poverty of the Franciscan spirituals.⁹⁴ Hence his ideas on the *visio beatifica* met with direct refusal in the circles of the Franciscan refugees in the Bavarian court. Most of all William of Ockham and Bonagrazia of Bergamo challenged and successfully refuted the argumentation of the pope.⁹⁵ On the other hand, John XXII had notable supporters as well, mainly from the Cluniacs and such important theologians, as Cardinal Annibal of Ceccano.⁹⁶ Eventually giving in to the pressure Pope John XXII retracted his opinion on his deathbed in 1334.

On 29 January 1336 John's successor, Pope Benedict XII set forth the papal bull *Benedictus Deus*, which officially confirmed as dogma that the *visio beatifica* can be reached immediately after (*mox*) death.⁹⁷ This closes a long and tortuous theological debate, but on the other hand it raises further questions. Most importantly, what was the effect this dogma had on

⁹² That means that he did not confirm it as a dogma.

⁹³ More on the sermons and the French translation of the texts: Marc Dykmans, *Les Sermons de Jean XXII sur la Vision Béatifique*, Miscellanea Historiae Pontificiae 34 (Rome: Università Gregoriana, 1961).

⁹⁴ Clayton J. Drees, *The Late Medieval Age of Crisis and Renewal, 1300-1500: A Biographical Dictionary*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), 255.

⁹⁵ Trottman, *La vision béatifique*, 471-493.

⁹⁶ Marc Dykmans, "Le Cardinal Annibal de Ceccano et la vision béatifique (1331-1336)," *Gregorianum* 50, no. 2 (1969): 343-82.

⁹⁷ John Gwyn Griffiths, *Divine Verdict: A Study of Divine Judgement in the Ancient Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 110. More in detail on Benedict's ideas: Friedrich Wetter, *Die Lehre Benedikts XII: Vom intensiven Wachstum der Gottesschau* (Rome: Università Gregoriana, 1958).

the visual arts, if any? Only a few studies have focused on this. Végh suggested that the opposition to John XXII was the main impetus informing the subject of the wall painting in Želiezovce.⁹⁸ He also proposed that two generations had to pass before these theological debates had any influence on the visual arts. Christine M. Boeckl researched the influence of the bull *Benedictus Deus* on another wall painting, the Triumph of Death in the Camposanto in Pisa.⁹⁹ She argued for the opposite: that these constitutions indeed had a quick influence on some contemporary artefacts. In my view, the *Scala Salutis* iconographical type, and therefore the fresco in Želiezovce supports Boeckl's theory. As we will see in the following chapters, the first example of the *Scala Salutis* appeared in the 1340s.¹⁰⁰ That means that they have been produced in parallel with the *visio beatifica* debate, which probably helped to focus the attention on the question of whether souls were judged immediately after their death. The *Scala Salutis* is directly a positive visual answer, which represents a judgment immediately after death with certain features. As I see it, this current theological message contained by the picture could even help the spread of the iconographical type. Hence, I will analyze its iconography in more detail and research why it became so widespread. But first I will have to seek the visual and textual sources and components of the *Scala Salutis* iconographical type.

⁹⁸ Végh, "The Particular Judgment of a Courtier", 303-314.

⁹⁹ Christine Maria Boeckl, "The Pisan Triumph of Death and the Papal Constitution *Benedictus Deus*," *Artibus et Historiae* 18 (1997): 55–61.

¹⁰⁰ Bibliothèque municipale, Avignon Ms 121, 73^v.

Visualizing the Particular Judgments

Angels and demons

There are many ways how medieval artists represented what will happen to the soul at the moment of death. To delineate the iconography of the Last Judgment would not only be far beyond the capacity of this paper, but would lead very far from the topic. What I will seek here is a smaller and much more obscure subject: what can we call a Particular Judgment?¹⁰¹ This way I will seek how they imagined what would happen with the immortal soul immediately after death, when it was parting from the mortal body.

Basically we have to separate the death of the saints, from the normal people. These men who were redeemed from their sins reached the Heavens without any *de facto* judgments. In the wall painting of the upper church in Assisi St Francis is lifted to the Heaven by the assistance of winged angels (Fig.24).¹⁰² But in the case of the common men judgment was necessary to reach the afterlife. In a visual form it was solved most effectively with a conversation between the angels and demons.

The most widely spread form of the Particular Judgment was the scene of Archangel Michael measuring the soul (*psychostasis*).¹⁰³ The image had its origins in Last Judgment pictures and became an extremely popular independent iconographical type from the twelfth century onwards throughout Europe.¹⁰⁴ The wall painting of the St Michael Church in Vienna

¹⁰¹ Under the definition of the Particular Judgments I mean the death and judgment of a single person, which happens before the Last Judgment. The most detailed research on the topic is the PhD thesis of Virginia Brilliant which formed the base of an article: Virginia Brilliant, "Envisaging the Particular Judgment in Late-Medieval Italy," *Speculum* 84, no. 2 (2009): 314–46. Another useful delineation: Wegmann, *Auf dem Weg zum Himmel*, 154–156.

¹⁰² Joachim Poeschke, *Die Kirche San Francesco in Assisi und ihre Wandmalereien* (Munich: Hirmer, 1985), 84–96.

¹⁰³ Géza Jászai, "Michael Erzengel," ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum, *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* (Rome; Freiburg; Basel; Vienna: Herder, 1971), 271.

¹⁰⁴ The first preserved example of the iconographical type in the west originated from the tenth century, however it really became popular only from the twelfth century. In the late middle ages many examples of this type indicate

(Fig.25) was made in the same period as the fresco in Želiezovce.¹⁰⁵ St Michael stands in the focal point of the picture, and on his two sides are, respectively, the Devil who tries to seize the soul and the Virgin Mary who tries to save it. In one bracket of his scale is the soul of the deceased person, and in the other one the demons are putting stones in to try to push it down.

In other pictures the struggle for the soul between the devils and the angels was more dynamic.¹⁰⁶ An early example of this type can be seen on the monumental Triumph of Death wall painting (Fig.26) of the Camposanto in Pisa by Buffalmacco.¹⁰⁷ In the turbulent composition, at a certain point, an angel and a devil are struggling over a monk, each pulling him in a different direction. At the bottom of the scene we can see corpses as well, and an angel is helping out a soul from one of them. As we will see, the composition in certain cases of Particular Judgments is reduced to only these two elements, which makes it more focused.

In the book of hours of Catherine de Clèves a demon and the armed guardian angel are fighting for the soul of the deceased over a corpse (Fig.27).¹⁰⁸ They are holding the Book of Deeds, which contained the sins of the dead man. In the illumination of the book of hours of Jean de Dunois the Devil tries again to catch the soul, but is rescued by three angels (Fig.28).¹⁰⁹ From the top of the page the Father is looking down upon the struggle. The role of the latter motif is enhanced in the book of hours of Yolande of Anjou (Fig.29), also called the Rohan

that it became one of the most popular representations of Michael the archangel in many parish churches. Mary Phillips Perry, "On the Psychostasis in Christian Art," *Burlington Magazine* 22 (March 1912): 94–105, 208–18. A good introduction to the evolution of the Psychostasis in late medieval wall paintings: Eva Herucová, "Postavy a psychostasis na maľbe v Porube (The Figures and the Psychostasis on the Fresco in Poruba)," *Pamiatky a múzeá*, no. 4 (2013): 2–8.

¹⁰⁵ Elga Lanc, *Die Mittelalterlichen Wandmalereien in Wien und Niederösterreich*, Corpus der Mittelalterlichen Wandmalereien Österreichs 1 (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1983), 24.

¹⁰⁶ There is no traditional name of this group in the historiography, but Brilliant recently referred to it as the struggle between angels and devils for the possession of a soul: Brilliant, "Envisaging the Particular Judgment in Late-Medieval Italy," 324–328.

¹⁰⁷ Luciano Bellosi, *Buffalmacco e il Trionfo della Morte*, Saggi 522 (Torino: Einaudi, 1974), More specifically on the Particular Judgment aspect of the iconography: Boeckl, "The Pisan Triumph of Death and the Papal Constitution Benedictus Deus," 55–61.

¹⁰⁸ The hour book of Catherine de Clèves, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 917, 206. Anne Margreet W. As-Vijvers, *From the Hand of the Master: The Hours of Catherine of Cleves* (Antwerp: Ludion, 2009), 8.

¹⁰⁹ The hour book of Jean de Dunois, London, British Library, Yates Thompson MS 3, 201^v.

Hours, from around 1415–1425.¹¹⁰ In the text rolls a gripping dialogue can be read. The dying man in fear of the devils asks for help from God in Latin: “Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit. You have redeemed me, O Lord, thou God of truth”.¹¹¹ God responds in French: “Do penance for thy sins, and thou shalt be with me in the judgment”.¹¹²

The double intercession

The Particular Judgments, which we have described in the preceeding subchapter, are in certain cases expanded by the double intercession of the Virgin Mary and Christ. Its sources should be found in twelfth-century theology, and are strongly inspired by the Marian propaganda of St Bernard of Clairvaux.¹¹³ At this time the role of the Virgin Mary was revalued, and she stood before the people as the principal *mediatrix* for the mortals. This is not only visible in the prevalence of her depictions and the expansion of her cult, but also in her new role in the Particular Judgments as an intercessor.

This mediation had its own symbolical rite, which was expressed by a defined set of gestures. The mystical scene when Mary supplicates before Christ, and Christ mediates towards the Father was first described by the Benedictine abbot Ernaldus Bonnevalensis (1100–1156): “Christ, with his nude side, shows to the Father his side and wounds, and Mary to Christ her chest and breasts.”¹¹⁴ The first preserved representations of this mystical scene are only from

¹¹⁰ François Boespflug, *Dieu et ses images: Une histoire de l'éternel dans l'art* (Montrouge: Bayard Jeunesse, 2011), 228-231.

¹¹¹ “In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum, redemisti me Domine, Deus veritatis.” Reference for John 6:30. English translation from Thomas Sherrer R. Boase, *Death in the Middle Ages: Mortality, Judgment and Remembrance* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), 119.

¹¹² “Pour tes péchés pénitence feras. Au jour du Jugement avecque moi seras.” English translation: *ibidem*.

¹¹³ Koepplin, “Interzession,” 346.

¹¹⁴ “Christus, nudato latere, Patri ostendit latus et vulnera; Maria Christo pectus et ubera.” PL 189, 1726C-D.

the beginning of the fourteenth century.¹¹⁵ However, I have to note that we can observe a similar intercession, but without the judgment of the Father, already around 1300. On the top of the Hereford *mappa mundi* the Virgin Mary is kneeling in the aforementioned position showing her nude breasts to Christ the judge (Fig.30).¹¹⁶ In the inscriptions she asks her son referring to “the breasts at which you sought the Virgin’s milk”.¹¹⁷ This line is paraphrased in the text roll of Želiezovce. Therefore I think, even if we cannot identify the direct source of the inscriptions of the *Scala Salutis*, I can argue that the antecedent versions can already be found a hundred years earlier.

The first preserved double intercession can be observed in a copy of the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* from 1324.¹¹⁸ Here the painter represented the visual version of what we can read in Ernaldus: in one picture the Virgin is showing her breast to Christ, and in the next picture the Son is pointing to his barren side wound in front of the Father. These pictures could be the main predecessors of the *Scala Salutis* iconographical type. Moreover, sometimes the Particular Judgment concerned a whole family. The painting from the Cathedral in Florence depicts a similar scene, where the supplication of the Virgin Mary and Christ is for eight little people, who probably all belonged to the same family (Fig.31).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Koeplin, “Interzession,” 347-352. I will discuss later in more detail the symbolic meaning of the Virgin Mary’s breasts in the iconographical chapter of the thesis.

¹¹⁶ Scott D. Westrem, *The Hereford Map: A Transcription and Translation of the Legends with Commentary*, *Terrarvm Orbis: History of the Representation of Space in Text and Image 1* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 7.

¹¹⁷ “Veici, beu fiz, mon piz, de deinz la quele chare preistes, E les mamelectes, dont leit de Virgin queistes. Eyez merci de touz si com vos memes deistes, Ke moy ont servi, kant Sauveresse me feistes.” English translation: *ibidem*. “See, dear son, my bosom, in which you took flesh, And the breasts at which you sought the Virgin’s milk; Have mercy – as you yourself have pledged – on all those Who have served me, since you made me the way of salvation.”

¹¹⁸ Codex Cremanensis 243 44^v, 45^r, 1324, Kremsmünster, Benedictine abbey. The codex is published in facsimile: Willibrord Neumüller, *Speculum Humanae Salvationis, 1324-1500: Vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe des Codex Cremifanensis 243 des Benediktinerstifts Kremsmünster* (Graz: Akademische Druck u. Verlagsanstalt, 1972).

¹¹⁹ Inscriptions: Maria: “Dolciximo figliuolo pellac: / te chio abbi mia di chostoro” (Dearest Son, because of the milk that I gave you, have mercy on them), Jesus: “Padre mio sieno salvi chostoro pedaquali tu / volesti chio patissi passione” (“My Father, let those be saved for whom you wished me to suffer the Passion”).

Forming the text of the *Scala Salutis*

The inscriptions of the Želiezovce wall painting and the *Scala Salutis* iconographical type can be found independently, without the visual representation (App.T.1-9)¹²⁰. What can we do with these codices and what relation do they have to the images? This important question at first seems to be a classic chicken and egg problem, with no simple solution as to which existed first. Indeed, I believe, with a careful analysis we can suggest that the written form originated earlier than the iconographical type, and charted its own parallel, independent course. The problem of the text of the *Scala Salutis* is that it is first preserved independently only from the second part of the fourteenth century, which thus places it later than the first picture which contains it.¹²¹ However, this should not mean that it could not originate earlier. Indeed, based on the rhythm and verse form Walther suggests that it should have been already formed in the thirteenth century.¹²²

Tracing back the analogies of the inscriptions in the *Scala Salutis* wall painting of Želiezovce Végh referred to a Viennese manuscript from the first half of the fifteenth century. This find ignored the previous study of Thomas Heffernan who found six manuscript analogies. These were all from the first part of the fifteenth century.¹²³ In the following I will supplement this list with three new findings, so all together we have nine text-only references for the *Scala Salutis* iconographical type. The first one originated in the second half of the fourteenth century, and the last is from the sixteenth. Their origin can be traced back to England, Germany, and Austria.

¹²⁰ For texts from the appendix for the *Scala Salutis* iconographical type I will refer to as App.T.

¹²¹ The first preserved image of the iconographical type is an illumination from the 1340s, which I will discuss later more in detail in the last chapter. Bibliothèque municipale, Avignon Ms 121, 73^v.

¹²² Hans Walther, *Das Streitgedicht in der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters* (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1920), 88, 233.

¹²³ Thomas J. Heffernan, "The Virgin as an Aid to Salvation in Fifteenth Century English and Latin Verses," *Medium Aevum* 52 (1984): 229–38.

The first preserved textual version of the *Scala Salutis* can be found in the collection of the Peterborough Library.¹²⁴ It offers for the reader the basic text containing the inscriptions of the *Scala Salutis*, which means that the persons who speak are the Demon, Angelus, Anima, Maria, Filius Dei, Pater, and another Angelus again. Another reference is included in the manuscript residing in the collection of the Lambeth Palace, but originated in the first quarter of the fifteenth century in northern Europe.¹²⁵ Since the codex belonged to Wilfridus (*Liber Wilfridi Junioris*) the *Scala Salutis* verse is sometimes mentioned in the English literature as the Wilfridus dialogue.¹²⁶ There are also two German manuscripts from the first half of the fifteenth century, stored in the Seminar Library in Eichstätt and in the University Library in Marburg.¹²⁷

In addition three Austrian manuscripts from the first half of the fifteenth century can be found in the collection of the National Library in Vienna.¹²⁸ One of them, however contains a unique variant of the text. Instead of the normal, six Leoninus verses it show to us twelve Leoninus verses ordered in pairs. The speakers are in order of the Infirmus, Diabolus, Angelus, Maria, Filius, Pater, Pater ad Angelum, and Johannes.¹²⁹ These double lines are compiled in such a solid unit and so fluid that it seems to me unlikely that somebody just supplemented the

¹²⁴ James, *Lists of Manuscripts Formerly in Peterborough Abbey Library*, 8-9.

¹²⁵ Library of Lambeth Palace, MS 260, 66^v.

¹²⁶ Heffernan, "The Virgin as an Aid to Salvation in Fifteenth Century English and Latin Verses," 229–38, James, Montague Rhodes, and Claude Jenkins, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Lambeth Palace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 407. Mentioned as the Wilfridus dialogue: Julia Boffey, and A. S. G. Edwards, *A New Index of Middle English Verse* (London: British Library Press, 2005), 2463.

¹²⁷ Staats- und Seminarbibliothek, Eichstätt, Ms 748., Universitätsbibliothek, Marburg, Ms Q 12, f. 308^r. Heffernan, "The Virgin as an Aid to Salvation in Fifteenth Century English and Latin Verses," 229–38.

¹²⁸ Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Ms 4201, f. 12^v, Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, 4558 f 4^v, Nationalbibliothek, Vienna Ms 4694 f 75^v. Ibidem.

¹²⁹ Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, 4558 f 4v. The text is published in: Hans Walther, *Das Streitgedicht in der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters* (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1920), 223–224: "Infirmus: O spes, in morte mihi parce, Maria, precor te! / Mox quoque placaris, misereri, quando rogaris. / Diabolus: Hanc animam posco, quam plenam crimine nosco. / Quoque potest peius, ducatur spiritus eius! / Angelus: Hic si peccauit, nece pressus opem rogitaui, / Et contritus ita fert spem [pro] perpeti vita. / Maria: Me quia suxisti, fili, ueniam precor isti, / Pluribus in signum venie fac hunc fore dignum! / Filius: Vvulnera cerne, peter, fac, quod rogitat mea mater! / Vt cesset flere, peccatori miserere! / Pater: Nate, petita dabo; que poscis, nulla negabo / Et mox te viso sit ei locus in paradiso. / Pater ad angelum: Angele, dic isti veniam pro nomine Christi! / Virginis ob nomen matrisque sibi datur omen. / Iohannes: Te fons uirtutum viciis iubet esse solutum."

existing verses. More probably this was the original poem, which had to be simplified. In the visual representations the short text rolls contain only the first lines, and the *Pater ad Angelum* is totally missing in all of the cases. This poem probably originated in the thirteenth century and was intended to be the base textual source of the iconographical type.

However, as it seems from the example, the text survived and lived parallel with the *Scala Salutis* images. In these cases it is most often paired with *ars moriendi* texts. But sometimes its original meaning was forgotten and changed, and we can find it in a legend as well. A manuscript copied in 1443 and preserved in Eton College shows us an extremely different use of the source, where the verses were pasted into a healing legend.¹³⁰ Gobardeys, a certain Parisian, performed a special devotion towards the Virgin Mary, but other than this he was allegedly a scoundrel. On the feast of the Purification, when he usually offered candles to the Virgin, he got sick and had to stay in bed. When everyone was at the church, the ceiling of the house opened and a heavenly vision came to Gobardeys where the Father was judging him. From here on, the story became familiar for us: the Devil tried to seize the soul, but the Virgin Mary supplicated on his behalf. Then Christ asked mercy for him, and the Father granted this, which was also confirmed by an angel. Finally, he woke up restored to health, and from then on he corrected his ways (*correxuit se*). This story confirms that the poem was so successful that it seeped into the legend literature as well.

Another text can be read in an incunabulum from the Cambridge University Library, which despite its late date refers to an earlier inscription. The book, Peter Argellata's *Chirurgica* was printed in Venice in 1497, but the inscription in the first page which contains the text belongs to the autograph showing the ownership of Thomas Lorkyn from 1591.

¹³⁰ Eton College MS 34, fol. 88^{r-v}. Published here: Siegfried Wenzel, "A Latin Miracle with Middle English Verses," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 72, no. 1 (1971): 77–85.

However, Lorkyn mentions that he only copied an already earlier existing inscription, which he saw in the glass of the windows of the hall at Queens' College in Cambridge.¹³¹

¹³¹ John C. T. Oates. *Cambridge University Library: A History from the Beginnings to the Copyright Act of Queen Anne* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 144.

The iconography of the *Scala Salutis*

Depicting the way of salvation

If we try to define the main characteristics of the iconographical type of the *Scala Salutis*, we should focus on is the powerful dual intercession of the Virgin Mary and Christ. This feature is first described by the words of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) in a sermon: “The Son listens to the Mother and the Father listens to the Son. (...) [The Virgin Mary] is the ladder of sinners, she is my greatest confidence; she is the whole basis for my hope”.¹³² Since this heavenly ladder which describes how to ascend to the height of divine grace was the basis of the images, naming this picture type the *Scala Salutis* seems proper. The three Polish examples were called in this manner in earlier research, and I apply it to provide a name for the whole iconographical type.¹³³

I will argue that the *Scala Salutis* is an independent iconographical type, which is supported by the many examples discussed below and provided in the appendix.¹³⁴ After offering a periodical overview of the examples I will analyze the traits of the images through the means of comparative iconography. I will focus on the most crucial elements: the Devil, the double intercession, the additional saints and the dying man. With the help of this research my aim is to divide them into smaller subgroups and to show the abundance of the variations in one single picture type. I will also have to raise the issue as to the origin and the afterlife of

¹³² “Exaudiet utique Matrem Filium et exaudiet Filium Pater. (...) haec peccatorum scala, haec mea maxima fiducia est, haec tota ratio spei meae.” PL CLXXXIII, 441.

¹³³ Alicja Karłowska-Kamzowa, “Śląsk,” in *Gotyckie malarstwo ścienne w Polsce* (Gothic Wall Painting in Poland) by Jerzy Domasłowski, Alicja Karłowska-Kamzowa, Marian Kornecki, and Helena Małkiewiczówna, Seria Historia Sztuki 17 (Poznań: Uniwersitet Im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1984), 45. Jerzy Domasłowski, “Pomorze Wschodnie (Pomeralie),” in *Gotyckie malarstwo ścienne w Polsce* (Gothic Wall Painting in Poland) by Jerzy Domasłowski, Alicja Karłowska-Kamzowa, Marian Kornecki, and Helena Małkiewiczówna, Seria Historia Sztuki 17 (Poznań: Uniwersitet Im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1984), 141.

¹³⁴ For pictures from the appendix for the *Scala Salutis* iconographical type I will refer to as App.P. I will refer to them only at their first mentioning.

the *Scala Salutis*. What was the purpose of these images? Who ordered them, where were they situated, and on what media do they appear? The broad spread of the picture type, which has surviving examples in France, the Hungarian kingdom, Germany, Poland, England, Italy, and Switzerland attests to a certain level of popularity. This suggests the opposite of the claims of Véggh and Buran who limited the topic to central Europe.¹³⁵ The different media, since the type is known in illuminations, wall paintings, and even a glass window, also raise significant questions which are strongly connected the different social spheres which ordered them. From this variety I chose the *Scala Salutis* of György Becsei as my primary guide (App.P.2). This well-preserved early representation is not only the first monumental image of the iconographical type, but one of the most complex ones. We know the patron and the depicted persons as well, which offers to us a solid starting point for research.

In the following I will introduce and then analyze the sixteen examples which I found that fit into the iconographical type of the *Scala Salutis*. As these images attest this picture type emerged at the very latest in the 1340s and was “in use” until at least 1590.¹³⁶ The common features of the *Scala Salutis* images are the presence of the dying person, the Devil, the double intercession of the Virgin Mary and Christ, the Father, angels and often a saint. All of them contain a variation of the inscriptions, which we know from the Želiezovce wallpainting. However, the language is also variable: it can be read in Old French, Old German, Middle English, but most of all in Latin.

If we want to seek the origins of the *Scala Salutis* we have to consider both the visual and the textual elements of the iconographical type. The Particular Judgment and the Double Intercession are incorporated in the *Scala Salutis*, and both are important components of its visual sources. As we have seen, the inscriptions also existed independently of the *Scala*

¹³⁵ Véggh, *The Particular Judgment of a Courtier*, 303-14. Buran, *Studien zur Wandmalerei um 1400 in der Slowakei*, 137-43.

¹³⁶ The first preserved example is the illumination Bibliothèque municipale, Avignon Ms 121, 73^v from 1340s, and the last one is the glass window of the Cistercian monastery in Wettingen from 1590.

Salutis. At some point, which we cannot locate with our actual testimonies but in my view most probably in the beginning of the fourteenth century, the visual and textual parts were melded together. The spread of the image can be explained not only by the flourishing of late medieval piety towards the dead, but it also had the advantage that it contained contemporary theological conceptions, like the *visio beatifica*. It offered a reasonable visual explanation what will happen with the soul after death, and with this purpose served a primary human need about how to earn salvation.

The first preserved example of the *Scala Salutis* is the illumination of the Book of Hours Ms 121 of the Bibliothèque municipale in Avignon (App.P.1).¹³⁷ The miniature was painted in the time of the *Visio beatifica* debate, around 1340, probably in southern France. The scene is narrated by Old French inscriptions in a Picardian dialect, and in a unique case the text rolls are ordered by Roman numerals I-VIII. It presents to us the basic story of the iconographical type: the dying person asks for help from the Virgin Mary, who mediates his prayer with her Son. The interest of the miniature is that this dying person is a monk, just like the company in vigil around him.

The next example is the wall painting of Želiezovce, the first preserved monumental representation of the type from around 1388. The inscriptions are in Latin. This will be the common feature of most of the following images. Also originating from the second part of the fourteenth century is the illumination of the Enschede manuscript (App.P.3).¹³⁸ Through observing the style the manuscript was illustrated probably by a German master.¹³⁹ Another

¹³⁷ Bibliothèque municipale, Avignon Ms 121, 73^v. François Bœspflug, “La Trinité à l’heure de la mort.” *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes. Journal of medieval and humanistic studies*, no. 8 (January 15, 2001): 13-15.

¹³⁸ Twenthe Rijksmuseum, Enschede Inv.n°8. E. P. Van’t Hull-Vermaas, *De Handschriften En Incunabelen van Het Rijksmuseum Twenthe* (The Manuscripts and Incunabula of the Townmuseum in Twenthe) (Rijksmuseum Twenthe: Twenthe, 1975), 16-17.

¹³⁹ Ibidem 16.

German manuscript from 1400, the codex of the National Library in Florence contains a similar *Scala Salutis* picture (App.P.4).¹⁴⁰

Around the beginning of the fifteenth century an increase in the number of these images can be detected. Only fifteen years later, around 1415 the wall painting decoration of the St Francis of Assisi Church in Poniky was finished.¹⁴¹ The painter composed the *Scala Salutis* (App.P.5) into a sophisticated and detailed eschatological cycle, which was notably rich in mystical scenes.¹⁴² The Cotton manuscript of the British Library was illuminated around 1425 and contains another example (App.P.6).¹⁴³ This miniature is narrated with Middle English inscriptions, and shows us a “new” person: Death in the form of a corpse. As the other two manuscripts (App.P.7-8) of the British Library testify, this was a unique common feature of the English examples of the iconographical type. From these the Stowe manuscript is also preserved from the beginning of the fifteenth century.¹⁴⁴ The composition of the page is unusual: the figures are ordered in a horizontal line in the lower edge of the page, while the long, vertical text scrolls fill up the whole upper part. However, even more curious is the pen drawing of the Casanatense codex (App.P.10), which can be dated to between 1425–1450 and is evidently the most detailed preserved example of the iconographical type.¹⁴⁵ The picture is so complex that the cross of Christ connects two different levels of scenes. A less complicated

¹⁴⁰ Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence, Codex BR38. Werner Cohn, “Eine unbekannte oberrheinische Miniatur des „Weichen Stils”,” in *Festschrift Friedrich Winkler*, ed. Hans Möhle, 95–99. (Berlin: Mann, 1959), Dieter Koepplin, “N. 447,” in *Martin Luther und die Reformation in Deutschland*, ed. Kurt Löcher, 338. Wissenschaftliche Beibände zum Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums 8 (Nürnberg: Germanisches Nationalmuseum, 1983), Böspflug, *La Trinité à l’heure de la mort*, 15.

¹⁴¹ Buran, *Studien zur Wandmalerei um 1400 in der Slowakei*, 130.

¹⁴² Ibidem 130–152.

¹⁴³ Karl Brunner, “Mittelenglische Todesgedichte,” *Archiv für das Studium der Neuren Sprachen* 167 (1935): 23, Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness*, 87–94.

¹⁴⁴ British Library, London, Ms Stowe 39 32^v. Brunner, *Mittelenglische Todesgedichte*, 22–23, Douglas Gray, “A Spiritual Encyclopedia,” in *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale*, ed. Helen Barr and Ann M. Hutchison (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 114, Thomas J. Heffernan, “The Virgin as an Aid to Salvation in Fifteenth Century English and Latin Verses,” *Medium Aevum* 52 (1984): 235–236, Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness*, 87–94.

¹⁴⁵ Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome, Codex 1404, 37^v. Fritz Saxl, “A Spiritual Encyclopaedia of the Later Middle Ages,” 82–134.

image is the wall painting of the church of Niefern (App.P.9) from 1430–1440.¹⁴⁶ However, that does not mean that it lacks special features, since there is a unique combination of the *Scala Salutis* with the *Crucifixion of Christ*.

Due to the damaged state it is hard to observe and date precisely the wall painting of the SS Catherine and Margaret Church in Cracow (App.P.11), which was probably painted in the first part of the fifteenth century.¹⁴⁷ Its reconstruction can be assisted by the other two preserved Polish examples. Even if the upper part of the fresco of the church in Pelplin (App.P.12) is destroyed, the dialogue between the Devil and the dying man is still preserved and matches to the other Latin *Scala Salutis* inscriptions.¹⁴⁸ The missal of the cathedral chapter of the Wawel from circa 1450 on the other hand is the most perfectly preserved Polish example (App.P.13), even if the miniature is limited to the basic group of the dying man, the Devil, Mary, Christ, the Father, and a single angel.¹⁴⁹

The third English illumination is preserved from the second part of the fifteenth century (c. 1460–1490) and was depicted in the Additional Ms 37049 of the British Library.¹⁵⁰ This is the only picture where the complete Holy Trinity appears, as beside the Father and Christ a white dove symbolizes the Holy Spirit. It seems that the *Scala Salutis* spread to Italy only over time, since the first preserved examples are all from the last quarter of the fifteenth century. On the other hand, the only case when we can identify the painter is the fresco of the San Bernardo

¹⁴⁶ Mathias Köhler, *Evangelische Kirche Niefern* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 1996), 10-11, Karl Helmut Wagner, *Die Martins-Kirche in Niefern im Wandel der Zeit*, Ortsgeschichte Niefern-Öschelbronn 2 (Pforzheim: Goldstadtverlag, 1998), 175.

¹⁴⁷ Alicja Karłowska-Kamzowa, “Śląsk,” 45.

¹⁴⁸ Jerzy Domasłowski, “Pomorze Wschodnie,” 141.

¹⁴⁹ Archiwum i Biblioteka Kapituły Metropolitanij na Wawelu, Cracow, Missale Inv. MS 2 KP, f. 198^v. Barbara Miodońska, *Małopolskie malarstwo książkowe 1320-1540* (Book Illumination in Lesser Poland between 1320-1540) (Warszawa: PWN, 1993), fig. 124.

¹⁵⁰ British Library, London, Additional Ms 37049 19^r. Hans Walther, *Das Streitgedicht in der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters* (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1920), 223-224, Brunner, “Mittelenglische Todesgedichte,” 22–23, Brant Lee Doty, *An Edition of British Museum MS Additional 37049: A Religious Miscellany* (Michigan State University, 1969), 11-116, Heffernan, “The Virgin as an Aid to Salvation,” 229–38, Boffey, and Edwards, *A New Index of Middle English Verse*, 2463, Gray, “A Spiritual Encyclopedia,” 104, Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness*, 87-94, 308.

delle Forche Church in Mondovì (App.P.14), which was made by Antonio Dragone da Montereale in 1473. In the case of the Casa David in La Salle the *Scala Salutis* scene was painted (App.P.15) around 1475–1500 on the exterior façade. This fresco is an important testimony that the picture was not serving only ecclesiastical purposes.

Eventually, the glass window of the Cistercian church in Wettingen from 1591 testifies to us that the *Scala Salutis* (App.P.16) was still known and valid in the dawn of the early modern period.¹⁵¹ This is the last example of the iconographical type. It declares that this image could survive nearly three centuries without dramatic changes, which raises the question as to how it could be so popular. In other words, it should have carried such a clear meaning about the process of the Particular Judgment, that it could be still effective and evident for generations of people. Its relative immutability motivates us for further research of its iconographical specialties, which I will contribute in the following to discover the impetus behind the picture.

The Devil

The *Scala Salutis* scene opens with words spoken by the Devil: “I know that this soul is full of sins, like Nineveh”.¹⁵² In the Želiezovce wall painting the Devil is just standing next to the deathbed and with his left hand is menacingly pointing towards the dying knight György Becsei. Without his attempt to acquire the soul the image would lose its meaning. In this sense he is one of the fundamental figures of the picture, since the whole *Scala Salutis* iconographical type is built on a duality of the heavenly and hellish powers.

¹⁵¹ Susan Marti, and Daniela Mondini, “‘Ich manen dich der brüsten min, Das du dem sündler wellest milte sin!’ Marienbrüste und Marienmilch im Heilsgeschehen,” in *Himmel Hölle Fegefeuer: Das Jenseits im Mittelalter*, ed. Peter Jezler (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1994), 85.

¹⁵² “Hanc animam peccato quam Ninive plenam nosco.”

Beside the heavenly persons of Mary, Jesus, or the Father, the representation of the Devil shows a huge and exciting variety during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹⁵³ Sometimes, he is in disguise and differs from a human being only in small details: only his deformed feet or his pointed, furry ears hint to us who he actually is.¹⁵⁴ But typically he shows up as a hodgepodge creature, whose body contains both human and animal components. This refers to his chaotic, demonic character, which “does not stay in the tranquility of order”.¹⁵⁵ Since he barely wears clothes we can observe thoroughly his strange, hideous, and varied body. His skin is usually dark, his head is ugly and abnormal, and often he has many faces, which appear on his stomach or joints.¹⁵⁶

The Devil of the St James church shows an ideal picture of the less-complex images: he has dark red skin, his body is like that of a small human, he has two furry ass-ears on the top of his head, strange hoofs, and a short tail. He also has a pair of membranous bat wings, which fits his sinister character.¹⁵⁷ A big loss is that we cannot observe his face anymore, since the actual one is only the work of the nineteenth-century restoration.¹⁵⁸ However, beside the other preserved wall paintings, this one is probably one of the most superior representations of the Devil from the Hungarian kingdom, and is notable in the *Scala Salutis* scene for having an independent identity rather than just being a generic demon. In other medieval frescoes small

¹⁵³ About general on the medieval iconography of the Devil: Beat Brenk, “Teufel,” ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum, *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* (Rome; Freiburg; Basel; Vienna: Herder, 1971), 295-300. On the various representations of the Devil in late medieval art in Slovakia: Ivan Gerát, *Legendary Scenes: An Essay on Medieval Pictorial Hagiography*, translated by Martin Styán (Bratislava: SAV, 2013), 201-234.

¹⁵⁴ Gerhard Jaritz, “Visual Images of Supernatural in the Late Middle Ages, or, How to Make the Entities Recognizable that are not Part of our Natural World,” in *Angels, Devils: The Supernatural and its Visual Representations*, ed. Gerhard Jaritz, 17–28. CEU Medievalia 15 (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011), 23. More about the representation of the devils in incognito: Béla Zsolt Szakács, “Supernatural Figures Incognito,” in *Angels, Devils: The Supernatural and its Visual Representations*, 75–92. CEU Medievalia 15 (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011), 77-83.

¹⁵⁵ “In ordinis tranquillitate non mansit.” Augustine (De civitate Dei, lib. XIX, cap XIII). Alexander E. Makhov, “... In Diversas Figuras Nequitiae: The Devil’s Image from the Viewpoint of Rhetoric,” in *Angels, Devils: The Supernatural and its Visual Representations*, ed. Gerhard Jaritz, 29–50. CEU Medievalia 15 (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011), 30.

¹⁵⁶ Ibidem 38-39

¹⁵⁷ Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 62-63.

¹⁵⁸ See in the retoration chapter.

groups of demons and devils are preserved, mainly in *Last Judgment*, *Temptation of St Anthony*, *St Michael measuring the souls*, and *Death of Judas* pictures.¹⁵⁹ His closest analogy is the fresco of Poniky, however this *Scala Salutis* painting is also severely damaged in the case of the Devil's head.¹⁶⁰

But does he represent the general idea of the Devil of the *Scala Salutis* iconographical type? As we will see this is not at all the case. Observing these images we can declare that most of them were heavily dependent upon the creativity of the painter, and probably partially on local iconographical traditions. Beside Želiezovce and Poniky only three of the scenes depict the Devil with wings.¹⁶¹ The closest one to our fresco is the wall painting of Pelplin, which represented a small, bat-winged creature next to the deathbed. A more notable case is the fourteenth-century Enschede codex.¹⁶² Since the right side of the folio was cut off, we can only see part of the Devil, but they enlighten us that he had strange hoofs with four fingers, human hands, and curiously enough, feathered wings like an angel.

But the most intriguing Devil-figures can be seen on the three fifteenth-century manuscripts from the British Isles. The big, brown, bear-like creature of the Cotton manuscript has two horns on his head.¹⁶³ He holds with both hands a long pole, which ends in four sharp hooks. This hook will be a returning element on many *Scala Salutis* images. The Devil of the Stowe picture also has the hook in hands, but there he only keeps it on his shoulders.¹⁶⁴ His anthropomorphic body contains hands and feet with bird-like claws. But what is more fearful are the faces on abnormal spots of his body: on his knees, elbows and even his two shoulders. This “multifacetedness” is typical only for demonic characters in medieval Christian

¹⁵⁹ Erzsébet Tatai, “An Iconographical Approach to Representations of the Devil in Medieval Hungary,” in *Christian Demonology and Popular Mythology*, ed. Gábor Klaniczay and Éva Pócs, 54–71. Demons, Spirits, Witches 2 (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006).

¹⁶⁰ Buran, *Studien zur Wandmalerei um 1400 in der Slowakei*, 138.

¹⁶¹ The upward mentioned three examples: Enschede, Pelplin, La Salle.

¹⁶² Hull-Vermaas, *De Handschriften en Incunabelen*, 16–17.

¹⁶³ Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness*, 89., fig. 3.5.

¹⁶⁴ Ibidem fig. 3.7.

iconography.¹⁶⁵ The Additional 37049 shows a third type of Devil, which basically can be described best as a big, green ogre with solid, red horns and a huge red tongue outside of his mouth.¹⁶⁶ The implement he carries is not easy to observe but is probably a massive wooden club and not a hook.

The little, long-nosed black Devil of the Cracow miniature also tries to catch the soul with a hook.¹⁶⁷ The more rural version of the motif is a pitchfork, which can be seen in the hands of the very human-like demon of the La Salle fresco. The Devil of the Casanatense drawing has a conspicuously long hook, with which he has ensnared the soul of the dying man.¹⁶⁸ This picture shows other sinister features as well, since beside him the Mouth of Hell waits for its victim.¹⁶⁹ The latter motif is mainly comprised of *Last Judgment* pictures, but in this case is functioning perfectly to enhance the importance of the Devil and emphasizes the possibility for an unpleasant afterlife for this soul.

But sometimes the Devil shows up only in the corner of the picture. The little, skinny, red demon of Niefern with his pointed nose and piggy ears shows us the variety of forms that the Devil could take in the imaginations of people in the late Middle Ages.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ Makhov, *In Diversas Figuras Nequitiae*, 42.

¹⁶⁶ Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness*, 92., fig. 3.9.

¹⁶⁷ Miodońska, *Małopolskie malarstwo książkowe 1320-1540*, fig. 124.

¹⁶⁸ Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome, Codex 1404, 37^v.

¹⁶⁹ On the iconography of the Mouth of Hell: Gary D. Schmidt, *The Iconography of the Mouth of Hell, Eighth-Century Britain to the Fifteenth Century* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995).

¹⁷⁰ Wagner, *Die Martins-Kirche in Niefern im Wandel der Zeit*, 175.

The double intercession of Mary and Christ

The only hope for the dying men to escape the Devil was in the intercession of the Virgin Mary and Christ. In the first preserved example, in the illumination of the Avignon library the dying monk is supplicating the Holy Virgin to save him from Hell.¹⁷¹ This short Old French prayer definitely can be traced back to the Latin verse, which is preserved only in a later, fifteenth-century transcription: “O spes, in morte mihi parce, Maria, precor te! / Mox quoque placaris, misereri, quando rogaris”.¹⁷² In the *Scala Salutis* pictures usually only the first line was copied. This supplication was that which literally opened the door to the way of salvation for the dying persons through the mercy of the Virgin Mary.

The Virgin is kneeling in the wall painting of Želiezovce, which could emphasize her supplication. Taking a look at other examples of the iconographical type, this position is unusual and is repeated only in the Stowe manuscript.¹⁷³ In both examples Mary – accordingly to her supplicatory role – is depicted in casual robes with a long veil covering her head. In other pictures she appears sometimes wearing a crown on her head, like in the illuminations of the Cotton manuscript or the Additional 37049.¹⁷⁴ These representations are paying attention to her superior status as the *Regina caelorum* (*Regina angelorum*, etc.), which could make her an efficient and popular mediator.¹⁷⁵

If we take a close look at the Želiezovce picture we see that Mary is pointing to her breast. This motif makes sense if we read for her supplication: “Son, who has sucked this

¹⁷¹ “Je ai en vos mise m’esperanche Vierge Marie de Dieu mère / Desloiet m’ame de pesanche / Et d’Enfer où est mort amère.” Bibliothèque municipale, Avignon Ms 121, 73^v.

¹⁷² Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, 4558 f 4^v.

¹⁷³ Heffernan, *The Virgin as an Aid to Salvation*, 235-236.

¹⁷⁴ Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness*, 89., fig. 3.5. and 3.9.

¹⁷⁵ More on the iconography of the crowned figure of the Virgin Mary: Hendrik Willem van Os, “Krönung Mariens,” ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum, *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* (Rome; Freiburg; Basel; Vienna: Herder, 1970), 671, Marion Pramstrahler, “Die Ikonographie der Marienkrönung im 15. und frühen 16. Jahrhundert in Südtiroler Flügelaltären, Eine Studie zur Rezeption Michael Pachters,” (MA thesis, University of Vienna, 2008).

(breast), I came to pray for him (György Becsei)".¹⁷⁶ These lines are more directly identifying the topic, which seems to be a hidden form of the Breastfeeding Mary's (*Virgo Lactans*, *Lactatio virginis*) iconographical type.¹⁷⁷ The traditional primary impetus of this desperate gesture was to calm down the anger of Christ in the Last Judgment, which became a popular motif from the twelfth century onwards.¹⁷⁸ More specifically, the reference to the *lactatio* functions here as an attribute of the mediator role of the Virgin. A thirteenth-century Irish poet articulated this message in the following way: "May the breast that was laid to His lips be between me and fierce-hosted hell".¹⁷⁹ The Avignonese manuscript represents this more directly as we can see Mary's breast. This is repeated through many of the images, as in the cases of the Enschede manuscript, the Poniky wall painting, the Cotton manuscript, the Additional 37049 manuscript, and the wall painting in Mondovì. The studies of Marina Warner and Salvador Ryan demonstrated that the image of *Virgo Lactans* was in contradiction with the Immaculate Conception, and as the latter idea gained prominence so that the image of the *Virgo Lactans* declined in the fifteenth century.¹⁸⁰ In my view, this explanation can be considered in relation to the decline of the *Scala Salutis* as well, which also happened around the end of the fifteenth century. Since at that time it showed out-of-date ideas, it can easily be understood why its popularity started to decrease.

Beside the strong Marian aspect of the image, which is one of the main focal points of this iconographical type, in the wall painting of Želiezovce the knight György is seeking the

¹⁷⁶ "Hanc [mamillam] que suxisisti fili veniam precor isti."

¹⁷⁷ Generally on the iconography of the *lactatio*: Paolo Berutti, ed. *Madonna del Latte: La sacralità umanizzata* (Florence: Edizioni Polistampa, 2006).

¹⁷⁸ Salvador Ryan, "The Persuasive Power of a Mother's Breast: The Most Desperate Act of the Virgin Mary's Advocacy," *Studia Hibernica* 32 (2003 2002): 59.

¹⁷⁹ Quoted from the Irish poet Giolla Brighde Mac Con Midhe (c. 1210 – c. 1272), in: Ryan, "The Persuasive Power of a Mother's Breast," 60-61.

¹⁸⁰ Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 204, Ryan, "The Persuasive Power of a Mother's Breast," 61-62. The main idea behind this is that if Mary was free from all the sins then she was incapable of lactation. Contemporary texts reference its popularity: Jacqueline A. Tasioulas, "The Portrayal of Mary in the N-Town Plays," in *Medieval Women in Their Communities*, ed. Diane Watt (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), 227.

help of Christ.¹⁸¹ The Savior is standing before the Father, covered with a loin-cloth, and points to his side. This move refers to his side wound, which symbolizes his sacrifice through which he asks mercy from the Father for mankind.¹⁸² This side wound is supplemented with the hand stigmata that are visually represented in the fresco of Poniky.¹⁸³ Another subgroup of the paintings represent the Crucifixion of Christ in fact. Already in the first preserved example, in the Avignonese manuscript Christ appears on the cross.¹⁸⁴ Christ is represented here as hanging from the cross passively, while his head hangs limp from his neck. But in certain cases the two subgroups are melded together such as in the Additional 37049 where Christ is hanging on the cross with one hand but with the other one points to his side wound.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, in the Polish illumination the resurrected Christ stands next to Mary while resting his cross on his shoulder and with the same arm touches his side wound, while with his other hand he holds the text roll.¹⁸⁶

But in some cases the cross has even more important compositional functions and symbolic meanings. The complexity of the Casanatense drawing testifies to this.¹⁸⁷ The sophisticated image is built up from two levels. In the lower scene the Devil acquires the soul of the dying man, who seeks help from the Virgin Mary. She mediates this prayer to his Son, who is presented on the second image level in two other scenes: on the left side he is carrying the cross, and on the right he is helping the dying man. With this compositional solution Christ is presented in the picture three times, and his cross twice. Moreover, from the right wing of the crucifix a scale is hanging: in one basket are the instruments of the Passion and in the other

¹⁸¹ "X[riste] morte me salva tua precor te."

¹⁸² Koepplin, "Interzession", 351-352.

¹⁸³ Buran, *Studien zur Wandmalerei um 1400 in der Slowakei*, 137-43.; Very close analogies are the Cotton manuscript and the Florentine codex, where Christ shows his wounds in a similar way. British Library, London, Cotton Ms Faustina B VI vol. II 3^r, Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence, Codex BR38.

¹⁸⁴ Bibliothèque municipale, Avignon Ms 121, 73^v.

¹⁸⁵ British Library, London, Additional Ms 37049 19^r. Niefern, Mondovì, La Salle, and Wettingen are also similar examples. Wagner, *Die Martins-Kirche in Niefern im Wandel der Zeit*, 175, Marti, Mondini, "Ich manen dich der brüsten min," 85.

¹⁸⁶ Archiwum i Biblioteka Kapituły Metropolitanij na Wawelu, Cracow, Missale Inv. MS 2 KP, f. 198^v.

¹⁸⁷ Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome, Codex 1404, 37^v.

are the devices of sins, and the latter was found wanting even if a small demon is trying to push it down. Since this motif is typical when Saint Michael is measuring the souls, we can assume that the *Scala Salutis* image was flexible enough to sometimes take up influences from other pictures.¹⁸⁸

Saints as intercessors

In the upper right corner of the wall painting in Želiezove a saint is squatting in the air in an awkward position. His or her face is destroyed (and repainted), and the attributes, the brown habit and the aureola, are barely enough to identify the person. This makes the figure the most enigmatic part of the wall painting. How can we understand the figure's role in the fresco? The proposed way of salvation is mainly based on the supplication of Mary and Christ, which is usually assisted by angels. Indeed, I have to suggest that additional saints have made the intercession more complex. They have added an extra rung to the ladder which was leading up to salvation. Not all of the images contain this feature, and even if they do, we can observe different saints.

The Florentine codex has a saint who is holding the text roll with a line that is typical of the first angel.¹⁸⁹ Situated beside Mary and Christ, and most of all because of his characteristics we can provisionally identify him with St John the Evangelist.¹⁹⁰ He also appears in the fresco of Poniky.¹⁹¹ Here he quotes the same lines that the mysterious Želiezove saint said.¹⁹² A third, but slightly different appearance of him can be seen in the wall painting

¹⁸⁸ Géza Jászai, "Michael Erzengel," ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum, *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, (Rome; Freiburg; Basel; Vienna: Herder, 1971), 271.

¹⁸⁹ "Hic si peccavit / Nece pressus opera rogavit." Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence, Codex BR38.

¹⁹⁰ Böespflug, *La Trinité à l'heure de la mort*, 15.

¹⁹¹ Buran, *Studien zur Wandmalerei um 1400 in der Slowakei*, 142.

¹⁹² "te fons virtutum iube[t] esse solutum."

in Niefern.¹⁹³ St John the Evangelist here is part of a traditional Crucifixion of Christ composition. He and Mary are standing next to the Cross and he speaks of Christ on the text roll as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.¹⁹⁴ On the Casanatense drawing he seems to have a roughly similar position and is kissing the feet of the Savior on the Cross.¹⁹⁵ From these examples we can see that he was the most typical additional person in the *Scala Salutis* pictures – however, he is not the only one.

In the wall painting of Mondovì two additional saints appear. On the right side we can see St Bernard of Clairvaux. His figure is the most sizable one in the picture, notably larger than even Christ or Mary. However, I think this unusual feature can be explained by the fact that he was the patron saint of the church. On the other side of the painting another saint appears, St Barbara. She can be identified not only by the tower in her hands, but by the testimony of an inscription.¹⁹⁶ In this text the citizens themselves are asking for her help. This fact is worthwhile noting, since it suggests that a local cult enhanced her importance here. Another female saint, probably Mary Magdalen, appears in the exterior fresco of the Casa David in La Salle. Her identification is based on her appearance and the perfume jar which she holds in her hands.

These examples suggest that the appearance of additional saints was based on the title of the church or was related to another local cult. Since in Želiezove the appearance of the saint in monastic garb excludes the possibility of St George (or even St James), some other local cult seems to be a more probable explanation. The inability to determine the gender of the saint highlights the difficulty in identifying the figure, and based on his or her robe little more can be said beyond the figure's possible monastic connections.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Wagner, *Die Martins-Kirche in Niefern im Wandel der Zeit*, 175.

¹⁹⁴ “O Lamm Gottes unschuldig am Stamm des Kreuzes geschlachtet all Sünd hast du getragen.”

¹⁹⁵ Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome, Codex 1404, 37^v.

¹⁹⁶ “sancta barbara hora p[ro] nobis.”

¹⁹⁷ It is suggested by the brown habit that he or she is wearing.

The dying man

Ars moriendi pictures often emphasize that everybody has to die one day, whether he is a noble lord, a high priest, a pious monk, or a simple peasant. The *Scala Salutis* fits this requirement. If we take a closer look at the pictures we can observe that the dying person is not always the same, quotidian common man.

In the Avignon manuscript we can see a priest or a monk dying.¹⁹⁸ His identity is clearly signaled by his tonsure and the white monastic habit he is wearing. He is surrounded by other monks, who are depicted as smaller in size. This suggests that he was the abbot or an important person in the monastery and that his brothers ordered the picture in his memory. In all the other preserved examples the dying person is a layman, although not all of them are men. In the Enschede manuscript an unmistakable woman appears, whose head is covered by a white veil.¹⁹⁹

All the other manuscripts and wall paintings of the iconographical type show a dying man. However, there are notable differences between them. In most of the cases the dying men are lying in bed, covered with a blanket. Only their head or upper body can be seen, which is usually naked. Their soul is leaving from their mouth in the form of a little nude person. In the Polish illumination the better years of the life of the dying man has passed: he has grey hair and is going bald.²⁰⁰ But in most images we can see the opposite as in the wall painting of Želiezovce, the Cotton manuscript, the Additional Ms 37049 or the fresco in La Salle, where young, brown-haired men appear.²⁰¹ These pictures remind the viewer effectively that death can seize a human soul even at the zenith of his life. The only case when the dying man

¹⁹⁸ Bibliothèque municipale, Avignon Ms 121, 73^v.

¹⁹⁹ Twenthe Rijksmuseum, Enschede Inv.n°8. E. P. Van't Hull-Vermaas, *De Handschriften En Incunabelen*, 16.

²⁰⁰ Archiwum i Biblioteka Kapituły Metropolitanej na Wawelu, Cracow, Missale Inv. MS 2 KP, f. 198^v.

²⁰¹ London, Cotton Ms Faustina B VI vol. II 3^r, British Library, London, Additional Ms 37049 19^r.

is not laying in a bed is in the Stowe manuscript. Here, even the bed is missing, and a little man can be seen between the Devil, Death, and the angel. But how can the fact be interpreted that in the Florentine manuscript the dying man has his hands bound?²⁰² The same gesture appears in the images of people being tortured by demons.²⁰³ However, bound hands are strongly connected with penance. Thus on the *Scala Salutis* pictures they refer to the penitence of the dying man and also signal his sinful life. Since these images include such personal details they open up the way for further research on the social aspects and functions of the *Scala Salutis*.

Dead men don't talk

Who ordered *Scala Salutis* pictures and why? Only in one single case can the patron be identified by a contemporary and valid source: the wall painting in Želiezovce. For this reason this image can be the key object in deducing who and why ordered the surviving examples of this iconographical type. However, analyzing the context of the paintings of more obscure origins can illuminate several important aspects of their genesis. Since the functions of the *Scala Salutis* images were obviously connected with their medium, therefore I will separate the meanings of the manuscripts and the wall paintings.

The place of the *Scala Salutis* scenes in the codices is not accidental. Both the three English manuscripts and the Casanatense one contain the picture following their respective *Vado mori* texts.²⁰⁴ This *memento mori* scene was popular in the late Middle Ages. It shows to the viewer certain estates: kings, high priests, and lords who meet with and have to face their

²⁰² Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence, Codex BR38.

²⁰³ Andrea Begel, "Exorcism in the Iconography of Mary Magdalene," in *Mary Magdalene: Iconographic Studies from the Middle Ages to the Baroque*, ed. Michelle A. Erhardt and Amy M. Morris, 341–60. *Studies in Religion and the Arts* 7 (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2012), 347.

²⁰⁴ Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness*, 87.

death.²⁰⁵ Their lamentations can be read in inscriptions similar to the *Scala Salutis* ones. Jessica Brantley has argued that in late medieval piety these *Vado mori* poems inspired a similar interaction as witnessing a sacred drama might have done.²⁰⁶ Due to the mystical tone of the *Vado mori* poems and their preoccupation with death they could work very well together with the *Scala Salutis* pictures. Therefore I see the primary message of the *Scala Salutis* illuminations as *memento mori* art pieces, which were stimulating the reader's meditation on death. From the four codices the Cotton manuscript was the most successful in inspiring such thoughts. Opening the codex, the *Vado Mori* and the *Scala Salutis* pages can be seen at the same time next to each other.²⁰⁷ In the Stowe manuscript the two pictures were depicted on the retro and verso sides of the same folio, and thus could not be observed together.²⁰⁸

The meaning of the *Scala Salutis* as a wall painting is more complicated. These monumental works were more costly and therefore ordered their topic more carefully than the manuscripts. Only in the case of the La Salle fresco can it be claimed that its primary function should have been a *memento mori* since it is depicted on the wall of a private house. But the inscription in Želiezovce which informs us that it was ordered by Margit, the daughter of György Becsei for the memory of her father suggests that it functioned as some sort of epitaph.²⁰⁹ It was a personified artwork and was painted in the church patronized by the family, which means that it was also the burial place of its members. The commemorative function can be attested by the other pieces as well. In the fresco of the Cistercian monastery in Pelplin the dying man is a monk, which suggests that he was a member of the community.²¹⁰ The dying man of the Mondovì wall painting is personified as well, and seems that he belonged to the

²⁰⁵ *Vado mori* literally means I go to die, which refers to their lament. Douglas Gray, *Later Medieval English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 64.

²⁰⁶ Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness*, 83-109.

²⁰⁷ London, Cotton Ms Faustina B VI vol. II 2^v and 3^r.

²⁰⁸ British Library, London, Ms Stowe 39 32^{r-v}. In the third English manuscript the two scenes are even more far from each other: British Library, London, Additional Ms 37049 19^r and 36^r.

²⁰⁹ "Pro patre margarita filia in honorem patris."

²¹⁰ Jerzy Domasłowski, "Pomorze Wschodnie," 141.

citizens who are appearing in the lower left corner of the picture and supplicating for his salvation. The privatized and commemorative aspect of the *Scala Salutis* can be detected on these images.

The importance of the wall painting of Želiezovce

There could be an excellent reason why the *Scala Salutis* was selected as the subject of the wall painting is Želiezovce. The fresco was painted in honor of György Becsei, who was not only the landlord of the town but also an important courtier. The earliest sources are already mentioning him as an “*aule regie miles*”, which means that he was a knight. In the medieval Hungarian kingdom in the fourteenth century this was the most common way to refer to the knights, however it is still problematic to define knighthood as a social class because of the lack of sources.²¹¹ More visible and painful is the lack of sources as regards the chivalric culture in the kingdom. Contrary to the state of knowledge on some western European states we know so little about the literacy of the knightly class in Hungary that this has led some researchers to question if knighthood existed here at all.²¹² Indeed, the wall painting of Želiezovce has the potentiality to expand our knowledge on this topic. It tells us both about the chivalric culture, the literacy of the knightly class, but most of all about their piety.

The main idea of the *Scala Salutis* is how somebody is able to give an account of his sins in the moment of death. The same idea, the confession, has been embedded deeply in chivalric morality. Since we do not have enough preserved evidence to discuss this topic in the

²¹¹ More on this: Ágnes Kurcz, *Lovagi kultúra Magyarországon a 13-14. században* (Chivalric Culture in Hungary in the 13-14th Century) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988), 9-16, 17-64.

²¹² Jenő Szűcs, “A magyar irodalomtörténet I. kötetéről (About the First Volume of *The History of Hungarian Literature*),” *Történeti Szemle*, 1967, 127.

medieval Hungarian kingdom, I will use analogies from the West. Moreover, this approach offers another possibility to place this wall painting into the wider European culture.

Richard W. Kaeuper pointed it out that in literary sources knights often stated their fear of dying without confession.²¹³ In the Lancelot romance, for example, even the virtuous Arthur himself cries out when his end becomes apparent: “Oh God! Confession! The time has come!”²¹⁴ Piety was one of the fundamental points in the life of a knight, and worshipping God was one of his most important virtues. This fact is demonstrated not only by literary but by pictorial sources as well. From the latter ones I am mostly interested in a special group, those epitaph pictures, which contain more complex ideas than a schematic portrait of the deceased knight. Beside the often luxurious funeral monuments of royalty and the high clergy, the epitaphs of knights could seem to be lesser artefacts. However, these images provide creative iconographical solutions and help us to understand how the middle and high layers of the nobility imagined the way to salvation. The German knight Werner II, the Lord of Palant and Breitenbend and his wife Alveradt von Engelsdorff ordered a painting for their future tomb in the parish church of Linnich.²¹⁵ The final picture represents a similar idea as the wall painting in Želiezovce: Christ makes a judgment on the soul of the knight. In the lower part of the picture the flames and demons of the underworld appear, and Werner asks for mercy: “Help us, Lord, our Saviour.”²¹⁶ Beside the armed knight his wife, his mother, his twelve sons, and only daughter are also taking part in the supplication.²¹⁷ Rather than saints, in this painting four

²¹³ Richard W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 45.

²¹⁴ Norris Lacy, ed. “Lancelot, Part I,” in *Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, vol. 2 (New York: Garland, 1993), 276.

²¹⁵ Eberhard Quadflieg, “Der Palanter Altar und sein Meister,” *Aachener Kunstblätter* 24/25 (March 1962): 246–52. Another example is the epitaph of the Scholl family from around 1500: Berndt Hamm, *Religiosität im späten Mittelalter: Spannungspole, Neuaufbrüche, Normierungen*, Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation 54 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 483.

²¹⁶ “Adiua nos d[ominu]s salutaris n[oste]r.” Peter Jezler, and Bernd Konrad, “Eine Ritterfamilie läßt sich vor dem Fegefeuer Abbilden und hofft auf eigene Erlösung,” in *Himmel Hölle Fegefeuer: Das Jenseits im Mittelalter*, ed. Peter Jezler, 284–85 (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1994), 284.

²¹⁷ The inscription on the text roll of the wife: “Et p[ro]p[ter] gl[ori]am no[m]inis tui d[omin]e lib[er]a nos.”

angels are coming to his aid showing the attributes of the Works of Mercy, which refer to the virtuous life of the family to appease the wrath of God.

The research on the iconography of knights by Carlo Costantini claimed that the knight in the *ars moriendi* (in topics like in the Triumph of Dead, and the Three Living and Three Dead) appear as negative characters.²¹⁸ These representations emphasized the vices of the knights, often showing them as cruel, shameless figures corrupted by court life. However, these epitaph scenes are showing the knights as rather positive characters, whose salvation will be granted as is confirmed by the inscriptions. However, they indeed have a significant negative feature on these paintings. As the Devil claims in the wall painting of Želiezovce: “I know that this soul is full of sins, like Nineveh”.²¹⁹ The primary definition of knights is based on their equestrian military role.²²⁰ They cannot avoid getting their hands dirty in a fight. Therefore we can see why it was so important for them to make a confession in their final moments. The *Scala Salutis* image represented how the knight György can deal with his sins and earn the way of salvation, especially as the executioner of Charles, Prince of Durazzo.

²¹⁸ Carlo Costantini, *L'iconografia del cavaliere medievale* (Todi: Tau Editrice, 2009), 183.

²¹⁹ “Hanc animam peccato quam Ninive plenam nosco.”

²²⁰ A general overview on the social class of knights: Joachim Bumke, *Studien zum Ritterbegriff im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert*, Beihefte zum Euphorion 1 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1964), Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

Conclusion

The aim of the thesis was to place the mysterious *Scala Salutis* wall painting in the town of Želiezovce into a broader, European context. The starting point of the research was the restoration and art historical research of the fresco, which started in the summer of 2014 and will continue in the future to free the composition from nineteenth-century repainting.

Furthermore, my goal was not only to refine our knowledge about the historical context of the wall painting and the St James Church, but to construct the iconographical type of the *Scala Salutis*. Since the Želiezovce wall painting is the first monumental example of this, and this is the only one where we can identify the dying person, György Becsei, I have used this as a guide to analyzing the *Scala Salutis*. I collected fifteen more illuminations and wall paintings mainly from the fourteenth and fifteenth century with the same features.

The research can be continued in the future to dive more deeply into the comparative iconography of the listed images. I have suggested localizing the origins of the iconographical type to the beginning of the fourteenth century in western Europe, when texts and pictures with similar theological meanings were circulating, inspired by the *visio beatifica* debate. However, I think the verses of the text rolls can probably be traced back to the thirteenth century. Contextualizing these sources and models could be one possibility to offer new perspectives for further research. Moreover, the *Scala Salutis* did not disappear in the end of the sixteenth century. Probably with additional observations a transition could be detected between this and some complex Particular Judgment scenes in the early modern period. It is not only interesting for its iconographical specificity. It suggests rather that the message of the *Scala Salutis* did not lose its validity with the end of the Middle Ages.

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Appendices

I. Pictures about the St James Church in Želiezovce and its analogies

1. The copy of János Wermes about the *Scala Salutis*, FKT K 530.

ZSELIZ. rk. templom.
654/531



531

I.	fontē uirtutū uia's eā ar esse solitum :
II.	aspice peccatōe ⁊ ubi filius ē mediator
III.	nata petro dabo quīs nulla tibi negatō
IV.	uolenti eue p̄r tūc q̄ rogitar mea mater
V.	nūc ⁊ morte me salua uia p̄xor te
VI.	hanc que cupiāti alio uemam preare iei
VII.	hic si plane uoce prella opem rogitarūt
VIII.	hac aīaz peccet qm amne pte nam notō :
IX.	hoc ap' lē d' pige p' hōhe'

FOOT: Fleisch B

2. St Barbara and Apollonia wall painting from Želiezovce, Archival photo, source: Radocsay, Dénes. *A középkori Magyarország falképei (The Wall Paintings of the Medieval Hungary)*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1954.



3. Fresco decoration around the *Scala Salutis* picture, c. 1388, St James Church, Želiezovce.



4. The fragments of the St Barbara and Apollonia fresco, St James Church, Želiezovce.



5. Wall painting fragments in the apse, St James Church, Želiezovce.



6. Ornamental decoration, fresco, 16. century (?), St James Church, Želiezovce.



7. Picture St James Church, Želiezovce.



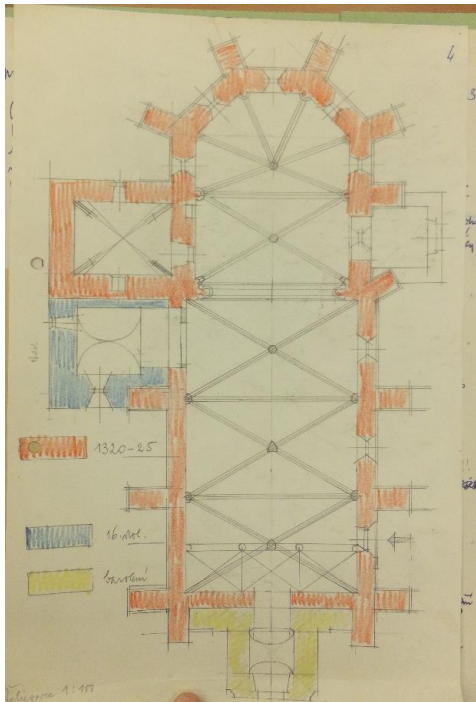
8. Apse, St James Church, Želiezovce.



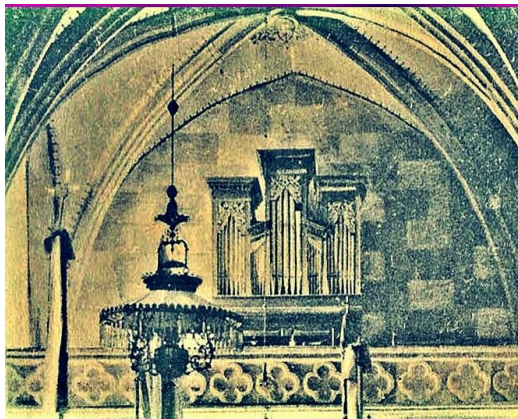
9. Vault of the apse, St James Church, Želiezovce.



10. Václav Mencl, ground plan of the St James Church, Želiezovce. APÚ Z 3638 4.



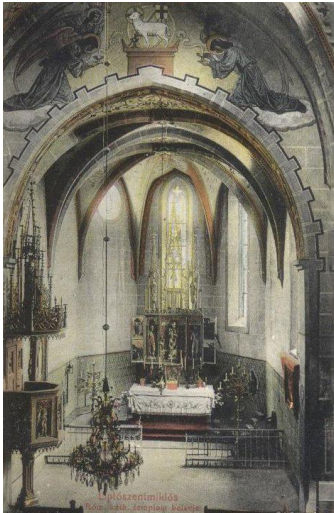
11. Archival photo about the western part of the nave, private collection of Pavel Polka.



12. South portal, St James Church, Želiezovce.



13. St Nicholas Church, Liptovský Mikuláš.



14. Profile of the responds, St James Church, Želiezovce.



15. Profile of a capital, St James Church, Želiezovce.



16. *Scala Salutis*, c. 1388, wall painting, St James Church, Želiezovce.



17. *Scala Salutis* (detail), c. 1388, wall painting, St James Church, Želiezovce.



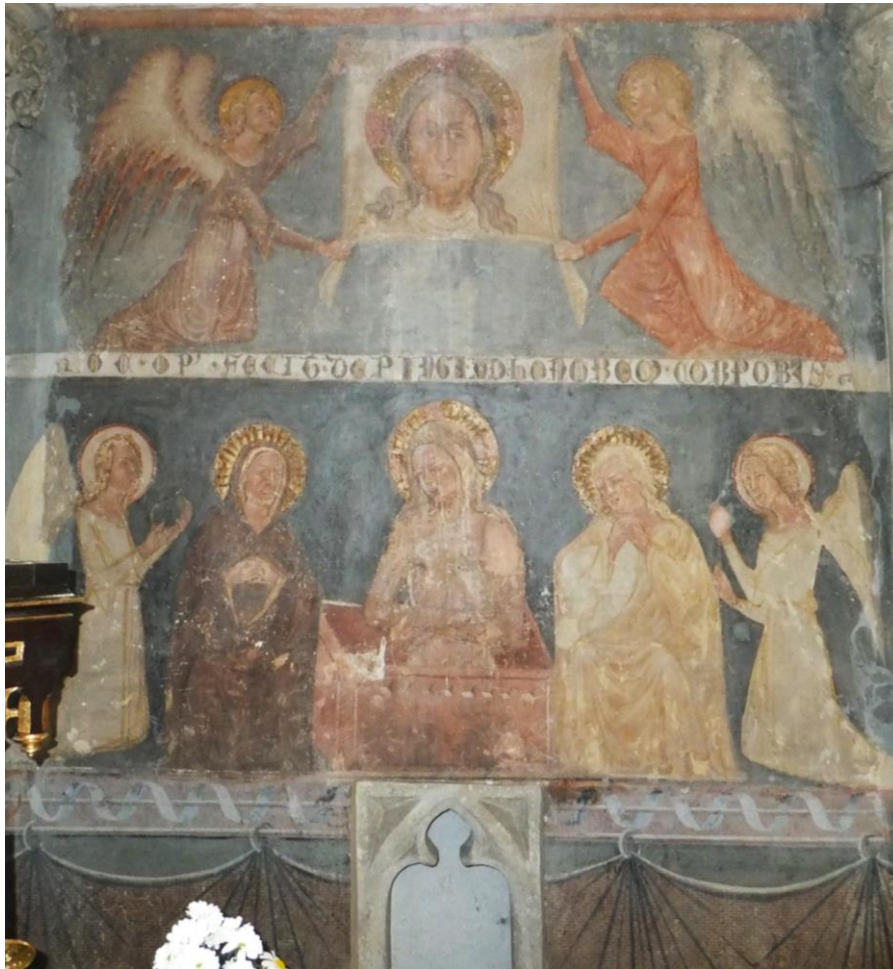
18. *Scala Salutis* (detail), c. 1388, wall painting, St James Church, Želiezovce.



19. György Becsei, *Scala Salutis* (detail), c. 1388, wall painting, St James Church, Želiezovce.



20. Imago Pietatis, 14th century, wall painting, St James Church, Želiezovce.



21. Copy about the wall painting by János Wermes, watercolour on paper, FKT K 532.



22. Tabernacle, 14th century, St James Church, Želiezovce.



23. Saints in the nave, beginning of 15th century, wall painting,, St James Church, Želiezovce.



24. Death of St Francis of Assisi, c. 1290-1300, wall painting, Basilica di San Francesco, upper church, Assisi.



25. St Michael measuring a soul, 2nd part of the 14th century, St Michael Church, Vienna.



26. Buffalmacco: Triumph of Death (detail), c. 1330, wall painting, Camposanto, Pisa.



27. The hour book of Catherine de Clèves, before 1434, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, MS 917, 206.



28. The hour book of Jean de Dunois, c. 1439-1450, British Library, London, Yates Thompson MS 3, 201^v.



29. Rohan Hours, 1415–1425 illumination, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, M.S. Latin 9471.



30. Hereford *mappa mundi*, c. 1300, Cathedral, Hereford.



31. The intercession of Christ and the Virgin, before 1402, tempera on canvas, prov. St Reparata Cathedral, Florence; today: Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, New York, 53.37.



II. The Scala Salutis iconographical type (Appendix P.)

	Sources			
	Date	Origin	Type	Collection, Place
1	c. 1340	France (South?), Southern artist, Picardian Text	Livre d'heures à usage picard / f°73v Ms 121	Bibliothèque municipale, Avignon
2	after 1388	Želiezovce	Fresco	St James (George) Church, Želiezovce
3	2 nd part of the 14 th c.	Germany	Manuscript, Inv.n°8	Twenthe Rijksmuseum, Enschede (Pays-Bas)
4	around 1400	Nürnberg	Manuscript, « Fons Virtutum » Codex BR38	Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence
5	c. 1415	Pónik (Slov. Poniky),	Fresco	St Francis of Assisi Church, Poniky
6	1425	England	Manuscript, « The desert of religion » / f°2r Cotton Ms Faustina B VI vol.II	British Library, London
7	beginning of the 15 th c.	England	Manuscript « The desert of religion » / f°32v Ms Stowe 39	British Library, London
8	1460–1500	England	Manuscript, f°19r Additional Ms 37049	British Library, London
9	1430–1440	Niefern (Germany)	Fresco	Evangelic Church, Niefern
10	1425–1450	Germany	Manuscript, f°37v,	Biblioteca

			Codex 1404	Casanatense, Rome
11	1st part of the 15th c.	Cracow	Fresco	SS Catherine and Margareth Church, Cracow
12	3 rd quarter of the 15 th c.	Pelplin (Poland)	Fresco	Cistercian Church, Pelplin
13	c. 1450	Poland	Manuscript, Missale Inv. MS 2 KP, f°198v	Archiwum i Biblioteka Kapituły Metropolitanej na Wawelu, Cracow
14	1473	Mondovì (Italy)	Fresco	San Bernardo delle Forche Church, Mondovì
15	1475–1500	La Salle (Italy)	Fresco, Exterior Façade	Casa David, La Salle
16	1590	Wettingen (Switzerland)	Glass window	Cistercian Monastery, Wettingen

1. Illumination

Date: c. 1340

Provenience: France (South?), Southern artist, Picardian Text.

Place: Bibliothèque municipale, Avignon Ms 121, 73^v.

Devil	Je requiers avoir à me part / Par Justice selon droiture / l'ame qui de ce cors se part / Qui est plaine de grant ordure
Dying man	Je ai en vos mise m'esperanche Vierge Marie de Dieu mère / Desloiet m'ame de pesanche / Et d'Enfer où est mort amère
Angel	A qui meure ame pechié / comme pres du carnel / Avers dieu [...] pechié / pardon prians de no coeur
Mary	G'en nourit (très) chierement / En mon fils prieerement / mes decheit ame pue
Christ	Grand sire Dieu mon père / La mort a gesoi..gne / Par la prière de ma mère / chele curie receut
God	Fius raisons est que ta requeste / soit essaucie plainement / Amour m'y meut qui est honneste / Nier ne le puis bonement
Angel	En bien et en abondanche / en tous tes pechiers pardonnés / Se ne sele ta fianche / par qui biens abandonne
Sign	La Mère Dieu che mort mi[s]e[ri]corde / celi fil petition priere pome hors / Et li fil au père recorde / ses plaies.../Et ainsi vois tu nectement / que toute a dieu en acordes / qui ta estoire si laidement / de il par pechiers desacordes.

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2. Fresco

Date: after 1388

St James (George) Church, Želiezovce



Devil	hanc animam peccato quam Ninive plenam nosco
Dying man	X[riste] morte me salva tua precor te
Angel	hic si peccavit nece pressa opem rogavit
Mary	hanc que suxisisti fili veniam precor isti
Christ	vulnera cerne pater fac quod rogitat mea mater
God	nasci petito dabo quae vis nulla tibi negabo
Angel	fomea virtutum viciis facit esse solutum
Saint	aspice peccator, ubi filius est mediator
Sign	pro patre margarita filia in honorem patris

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3. Illumination

Date: 2nd part of the 14th century

Provenience: Germany

Manuscript, Inv.n°8

Twenthe Rijksmuseum, Enschede (Pays-Bas)

Devil	hanc animam [...]
Dying man	te fons virtutum vitiis iubet esse solutum, o spes in morte me salve maria pr[ec]or te
Angel	hic si peccavit nece pressus opem rogitavit
Mary	hanc quia suxisisti fili veniam precor isti
Christ	vulnera cerne pater fac quod rogitat mea mater
God	nate petita dabo que vis tibi nulla negabo

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4. Illumination

Date: around 1400

Provenience: Nürnberg, Germany

Manuscript, Fons Virtutum, Codex BR38

Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence

Devil	Hanc animam posco / Quia plenam crimine nosco
Dying man	O spes in morte / mihi parce, Maria precor te
St John (?) (Angel?)	Hic si peccavit / Nece pressus opera rogavit
Mary	Hanc quia suxisti / Fli veniam precor isti
Christ	Vulnera cerne pater / Fac quod rogavit mea mater
God	Nate petita dabo / Quae petis nulla negabo
Angel	Ecce fons virtutum / Viciis jubet esse solutum

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5. Fresco

Date: 1415

Assisi St Francis Church, Poniky

Devil	[hanc animam posco qia plen]am crimine nosco
Dying man	[O spes] in morte maria sis michi precor te
Angel	[Hic si peccauit nece pressus op]em rogitaui
Mary	ubera que sicsisti filii veniam precor isti
Christ	vulnera cerne pater fac que rogitat mea mater
God	f[i]li orandte ubi dabo que iustas nullo negabo
Saint John the Evangelist	te fons virtutum iube[t] esse solutum

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6. Illumination

Date: 1425

Manuscript

The desert of religion, f°2r Cotton Ms Faustina B VI vol. II 3^r

British Library, London

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Brunner, Karl. "Mittelenglische Todesgedichte." *Archiv Für Das Studium Der Neuren Sprachen* 167 (1935): 23, Brantley, Jessica. *Reading in the Wilderness: Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007, 87-94.

7. Illumination

Date: beginning of the 15th century

The desert of religion, Ms Stowe 39 32^v

British Library, London

Devil	This saule chalange I for to wyne: yat is ful of [...] syne
Death	I haue ye soghte many a day: for to tak thee to my prei
Dying man	(...)
Angel	All if this saule synnede haue: oft times forgifves he gune craue
Mary	'For this thu souke in thi childehede: sone forgife him his misdeed
Christ	I pray thee fader graunte thi sonne: for my sake mi moder bone
God	Son als thu biddes so sall it be: No thing I will deny ye

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8. Illumination

Date: 1460–1490

Additional Ms 37049 19^r

British Library, London

Devil	This saule I chalange for to wyne / yat I know is ful of syne
Death	I haue ye soghte many a day for to tak thee to my prei /.In hele thee might[?] haue takyne hede / thus what in ilk man had m[ede]
Dying man	I hope in dede thu helpe me / goddes moder I pray thee
Angel	All if this saule synnede haue / oft times forgifves he gune craue
Mary	'For this thu souke in thi childehede / sone forgife him his misdeed
Christ	I pray thee fader graunte thi sonne / for my sake mi moder bone
God	Sone als thu biddes it sall be. Na thing will I deny ye

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Salvation in Fifteenth Century English and Latin Verses.” *Medium Aevum* 52 (1984): 229–38,

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9. Fresco

Date: 1430–1440

Evangelic Church (former St Martin church), Niefern\

Devil	Hier liegt ein todsündiger Mann mit Sünde überladen das kommt der Seele dort zu Schaden
Mary	Mein liebes Kind gedenk daran dass ich dich gesäuet han und [v]ergib mir diesen todsündigen Man
Christ	Sieh Vater meine Wunden an und vergib ihn was er hat getan
God	Gott wendet seinen Zorn von seinen Auserkornen
Angel	Gottes Sohn auf Erd ist kommen
Saint John the Evangelist	O Lamm Gottes unschuldig am Stamm des Kreuzes geschlachtet all Sünd hast du getragen

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10. Illumination

Date: 1425–1450

Provenience: Germany

Manuscript, Codex 1404, 37^v

Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense

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11. Fresco

Date: 1st part of the 15th c.

SS Catherine and Margaret Church, Cracow

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12. Fresco

Date: 3rd quarter of the 15th c.

Cistercian Church, Pelplin

Devil	Hanc animam posco, quam plenam crimine nosco
Dying man	Sis michi propitia sanctissima virgo Maria / Virgo dei spes una rei me iunge supernis / Thartharei ne dux putei me mergat avernis

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13. Illumination

Date: c. 1450

Missale Inv. MS 2 KP, f. 198^v

Archiwum i Biblioteka Kapituły Metropolitanij na Wawelu, Cracow

Devil	hanc animam posco quam plenam crimine nosco
Dying man	sancta maria succure miseris
Mary	hanc quam suxisti fili veniam precor isti
Christ	vulnera cerne pater fac quod rogat mea mater
God	fili petita dabo quae tu petis non denegabo
Angel	et fons virtutum iuberat eam esse salutam

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14. Fresco

Date: 1473

Artist: Antonio Dragone da Montereale (signature on the dress of St Catherine of Alexandria of another piece of the fresco cycle)

San Bernardo delle Forche Church, Mondovì.

Devil	[...] plenam [...] nos[co]
Dying man	[...] morte me salva tua precor te
Angel	[...]
Mary	[hanc?] quia suxisisti [...] veniam isti [precor?]
Christ	voluere quesso pater quod rogitat mea mater
God	a te petita natis quo vis tibi nulla negabo
Angel	[fomea?] virtutum [viciis facit esse?] solutum
St Bernard of Clairvaux	[...]
St Barbara	[...]
People	sancta barbara hora p[ro] nobis

15. Fresco

Date: 1475–1500

Casa David, exterior façade, La Salle.

Devil	hanc animam posco / nam plenam crimine nosco
Dying man	hospes in mortem Christe / veniam precor te
Angel	hic si peccaverit venie pns ope[m] rogitavi
Mary	hoc quia suscepisti [...] fili veniam precor isti
Christ	vulnera retine pater fac que / rugitat mea mater
God	nate petita dabo que / possis nulla negabo
St Mary Magdalene	no desperetis vos qui peccare soletis / essempro que meo vos reparate Deo
Sign	E vita confessio mortiff [...] / qui moura desconfes s[an...] / autry et repentansse jama[i...] / denfer nara secors ne [m...] / vrance va confessio privili /qui moura repentant et [ar...] / vereje confession glore qui per [a]d [...] / aura pour son guiard[on...]

16. Glass window

Date: 1590

Patrons: Melchior Müller – Elisabeth Kolin

Cistercian Monastery, Wettingen

Bibliography

Marti, Susan, and Daniela Mondini. “‘Ich manen dich der brüsten min, Das du dem sündler wellest milte sin!’ Marienbrüste und Marienmilch im Heilsgeschehen.” In *Himmel Hölle Fegefeuer: Das Jenseits im Mittelalter*, edited by Peter Jezler, 79–90. München: Wilhelm Fink, 1994, 85.

Appendix T.

Written versions without illustrations

1. Peterborough, Peterborough Library (Chapter Library?), 28^v. Late 14th century. Unknown MS number, mentioned and transcribed here: James, Montague Rhodes. *Lists of Manuscripts Formerly in Peterborough Abbey Library*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 8-9.

Demon: Hanc animam posco quia plenam crimine nosco.

Angelus: Hic si peccauit nece pressus opem rogitaui.

Anima: O spes in morte me solue maria precor te.

Maria: De qua suxisti fili veniam precor isti.

Filius Dei: Wlnere queso pater [da?] quod rogitat mea mater.

Pater: Nate petita dabo quod vis volo [nulla?] negabo.

Angelus: Aspice peccator vbi filius est mediator
Pro precibus matris qualis est responsio patris.

Non prius in dulcem declines lumina sompnum
Omnia quam longi reputaueris acta diei.

2. Library of Lambeth Palace, MS 260, 66^v. Provenience: Northern Europe. First quarter of 15th century. Published: James, Montague Rhodes, and Claude Jenkins. *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Lambeth Palace*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 407.

O spes in morte me salua Maria precor te etc.

My hope mayden I ask and crafe

In yis trans yt yn me safe etc.

Wilfridus clamidem quam suscepit per attridem

Seruauit pridem casus dedit abstulit idem.

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Heffernan, Thomas J. "The Virgin as an Aid to Salvation in Fifteenth Century English and Latin Verses." *Medium Aevum* 52 (1984): 229–38, James, Montague Rhodes, and Claude Jenkins. *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Lambeth Palace*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 407.

3. Staats- und Seminarbibliothek, Eichstätt, Ms 748. First half of 15th century.

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Heffernan, Thomas J. "The Virgin as an Aid to Salvation in Fifteenth Century English and Latin Verses." *Medium Aevum* 52 (1984): 229–38.

4. Universitätsbibliothek, Marburg, Ms Q 12, f. 308^r. First half of 15th century.

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Heffernan, Thomas J. "The Virgin as an Aid to Salvation in Fifteenth Century English and Latin Verses." *Medium Aevum* 52 (1984): 229–38.

5. Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Ms 4201, f. 12^v. First half of 15th century.

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Heffernan, Thomas J. "The Virgin as an Aid to Salvation in Fifteenth Century English and Latin Verses." *Medium Aevum* 52 (1984): 229–38.

6. Nationalbibliothek, Vienna Ms 4694 f 75^v. First half of 15th century.

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Heffernan, Thomas J. "The Virgin as an Aid to Salvation in Fifteenth Century English and Latin Verses." *Medium Aevum* 52 (1984): 229–38.

7. Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, 4558 f 4^v. First half of 15th century. Published: Walther, Hans. *Das Streitgedicht in der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters*. München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1920, 223–224.

Infirmus: O spes, in morte mihi parce, Maria, precor te!
Mox quoque placaris, misereri, quando rogaris.

Diabolus: Hanc animam posco, quam plenam crimine nosco.
Quoque potest peius, ducatur spiritus eius!

Angelus: Hic si peccauit, nece pressus opem rogitaui,
Et contritus ita fert spem [pro] perpeti vita.

Maria: Me quia suxisti, fili, ueniam precor isti,
Pluribus in signum venie fac hunc fore dignum!

Filius: Vulnera cerne, peter, fac, quod rogitat mea mater!
Vt cesset flere, peccatori miserere!

Pater: Nate, petita dabo; que poscis, nulla negabo
Et mox te viso sit ei locus in paradiso.

Pater ad angelum: Angele, dic isti veniam pro nomine Christi!
Virginis ob nomen matrisque sibi datur omen.

Iohannes: Te fons uirtutum viciis iubet esse solutum.

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8. Eton College MS 34 (copied 1443), fol. 88^{r-v}. Published: Wenzel, Siegfried. "A Latin Miracle with Middle English Verses." *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 72, no. 1 (1971): 77–85.

NARRATIO: Legitur in miraculo beate Marie quod erat quondam Parisius quidam ribaldus qui vocabatur Gobardeys, qui semper quolibet anno in honore purificationis beate Marie multas candelas diversis ecclesiis offerebat et speciales devociones frequenter in honore beate Virginis facere consuebat. Tamen in omnibus aliis festis erat valde peccator et ribaldus, utens scortis, tabernis et huiusmodi voluptatibus variis. Tandem quodam die purificationis devenit infirmus et non poterat ad ecclesiam venire ad faciendam reverenciam domine sicut ante solebat. Quando omnes erant ad ecclesiam, ille iacens in lecto solus videbatur sibi

quod doma (id est tectum) domus fuit apertum et vidit per tectum domus usque in celum, ubi vidit Patrem celestem sedentem quasi iudicem ad iudicandum eum, et Filium, videlicet Ihesum Christum, in medio inter celum et terram stantem cum vulneribus sanguinolentis. Et ad pedes lecti stabat Maria cum multis candelis in manibus. Et ad sinistram partem lecti sui vidit diabolum cum multis peccatis in quodam libro scriptis. Et a dextris quendam angelum. Sed modus illius ribaldi, sicut cuiuslibet talis, est loqui in rigma et versibus.

Ideo diabolus proposuit sibi hunc versum dicens: ‘Hanc animam posco / quam plenam crimine nosco.’

Anglice: ‘I aske thys sowle for to wyne, / qwech I know ful of synne.’

Et statim Maria cum candelis et eas demonstrans respondit diabolo cum hoc versu: ‘Licet peccavit, me candelis honoravit.’

Anglice: ‘Althow this mann in synne were wownde, / wyth candelis he worschepyde me on grounde.’

Unde ribaldus cogitans peccatum suum et magnum iudicem fore iustum ad iudicandum, diabolum paratum ad animam arripiendum, recogitavit de auxilio Marie et de eius misericordia benigna, sibi proposuit hunc versum: ‘O spes in morte, mihi nunc succurre, precor te.’

Anglice: ‘In myne hope at myn ende, / helpe me now or ellis I schende.’

Et statim Maria mamillam in manu sua versa ad filium suum proponens hunc versum: ‘De qua suxisti, fili, veniam precor isti.’

Anglice: ‘For thys pappe, sone, þat thi foode was Inne, / forȝeue thys synful man hys synne.’

Et statim vidit Filium ostendentem vulnera ad Patrem et dixit hunc versum: ‘Vulnere queso, pater, id quod rogitat mea mater.’

Anglice: ‘I aske, Fadyr, with woundis bledyng, / þat þou graunte me my modys preyng.’

Et statim respondit Filio per hunc versum: ‘Nate, petita dabo, quod vis volo, non te negabo.’ ‘Sone, þi byddyng grauntyd be. / þat þou wylt, I wyl not warnen the.’

Et statim post hec, angelus qui stabat ad dextram lecti sui proposuit istos versus: ‘Aspice, peccator, ubi Filius est mediator. / Per precem matris que sit responsio Patris.’

Anglice: ‘Beholde now, þou synful man, / þe sone is þi erandman. / For þe modys besechyng / swech is þe fadyrs answeyng.’ At ille reversus ad vitam et corporis sanitatem correxerat se et predicavit illud miraculum.

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9. Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Incunabulum 02323. Petrus de Argellata: Chirurgia. Provenience: Venice, 1497/8.

‘in fenestris aulae coll. regine in 1 sancta dei genetrix mea sis precor auxiliatrix 2
has suxisti fili veniam precor isti 3 vulnera queso pater, id quod rogitat mea mater
4 gnate petita dabo, quod vis volo nulli negabo.’ Bequest of T. Lorkin, 1591

Bibliography

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