Coexisting Traditions: The Conversion of the Jesuit Church of Uzhgorod into a Greek Catholic Cathedral

Abstract:

The first Jesuit religious house and church of Uzhgorod were built back in the 17th century. The second church, which came to be the current church as well, was constructed between 1732 and 1740. It was this edifice that the Greek Catholics had to convert to suit their own rite in 1775. Bishop of Mukacheve, András Bacsinszky (1772- 1809), taking over the church on 2 August, intended to make a selection of liturgical items, while the leftovers were meant to be bestowed on the Latin-rite community. For making the new furnishings of the Cathedral, on 27 of December 1776, Bishop Bacsinszky contracted Franz Feck, a sculptor from Košice. The sculptor undertook to carve the iconostasis, the main altar and the two preparation altars in unison with the drawing presented. For painting the icons of the iconostasis and of the proskomedia, on 30 April 1778, Bishop Bacsinszky contracted Mihály Spalinszky, the most talented Greek-Catholic painter of this period. 500 florenos rhenenses were given to him in the end of the work. On 17 December 1779, Johann Feck, brother of Franz Feck, who was deceased by that time, was contracted to prepare an episcopal throne and a pulpit. The transformation of the interior affected not only the furnishings but the walls as well. The sanctuary was probably given completely new paint. The fresco was begun by Andreas Tritina, a citizen of Prešov, who had started the job in 1778, but died on 30 April of the next year. The painting was finished by the painter Sebastian Hirschlinger from Humenné in 1780. Bishop Bacsinszky also ensured that the side altars would be freed from sculptures, and their altar-pieces were replaced by Mihály Spalinszky's works. Two of the side altars were donated to other churches. The 'make-shift' solution, whereby a church built according to the traditions of the Latin Rite was to be converted into the cathedral of a Greek Catholic bishop, would even inadvertently convey a different set of cultural and liturgical traditions to the Byzantine-rite community, a process that, in a number of instances, would produce thorough-going changes only much later in ancient liturgical traditions. Thus, the building itself would be assigned a role in cultural transfer. Bishop Bacsinszky made a conscious selection of the possibilities offered by the building: in a number of cases, he gave way to novel practices, yet; on the whole, he endeavoured to abide by the old traditions of the Eparchy, an achievement he could accomplish only through the necessary transformations.

Keywords: *Uzhgorod/Ungvár, Jesuit church, Greek Catholic cathedral, sculptor Franz Feck, sculptor Johann Feck, painter Mihály Spalinszky.*