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Sacred Urban Spaces in Seventeenth-Century Upper Hungary

This essay examines the changes that took place in the functions of sacred spaces towards the end of the seventeenth century, at the time of the upheavals of the Counter-Reformation in Upper Hungary. After having come under the control of the Catholic Church, the Protestant churches underwent a symbolic transformation characteristic of Catholic practice and belief. This transformation included changes to the furnishings and the inner spaces of the churches. At the time of the uprising led by Imre Thököly and Protestant refugees, along with the Catholic vicarage, these buildings, which were expressions of confessional belonging, became the primary targets of ritual violence. Through similar transformations and renovations, churches which since the Reformation had performed secular functions regained their status as religious buildings. In both cases, the participation of the community in Catholic rituals, such as re-consecration, mass, and procession, played a decisive role, since these rituals strengthened and helped to institutionalize (from the perspective of Catholic rites) the sacral function of the building.

Introduction: The Sacred Space

“Repair the cathedral church of Eger immediately, Your Excellency, and do begin it at once by the grace of God, because if not, I know that others will do it from Your Excellency’s income.” These lines were written in November 1692 by György Széchenyi, Archbishop of Esztergom, to György Fenessy, Bishop of Eger.¹ Even this short quote provides a clear glimpse into the thinking that accompanied such sacred spaces in that era. The repair of the cathedral in Eger—that key northern Hungarian city that served as the seat of an ancient diocese and was recaptured from the Turks in 1687, marking the end of ninety-one years of Ottoman rule—would have been the responsibility of the bishop, but his failure to do so directly would mean others would do so instead, at the episcopate’s expense. Alongside the religious functions of this space, then, others now also appeared—concerns from the financial to those involving church politics. The reputation of the Catholic Church could ride on the question of renovating

1 Egri Érseki Levéltár (EÉL) [Eger Archiepiscopal Archives], Archivum Vetus, no. 722.

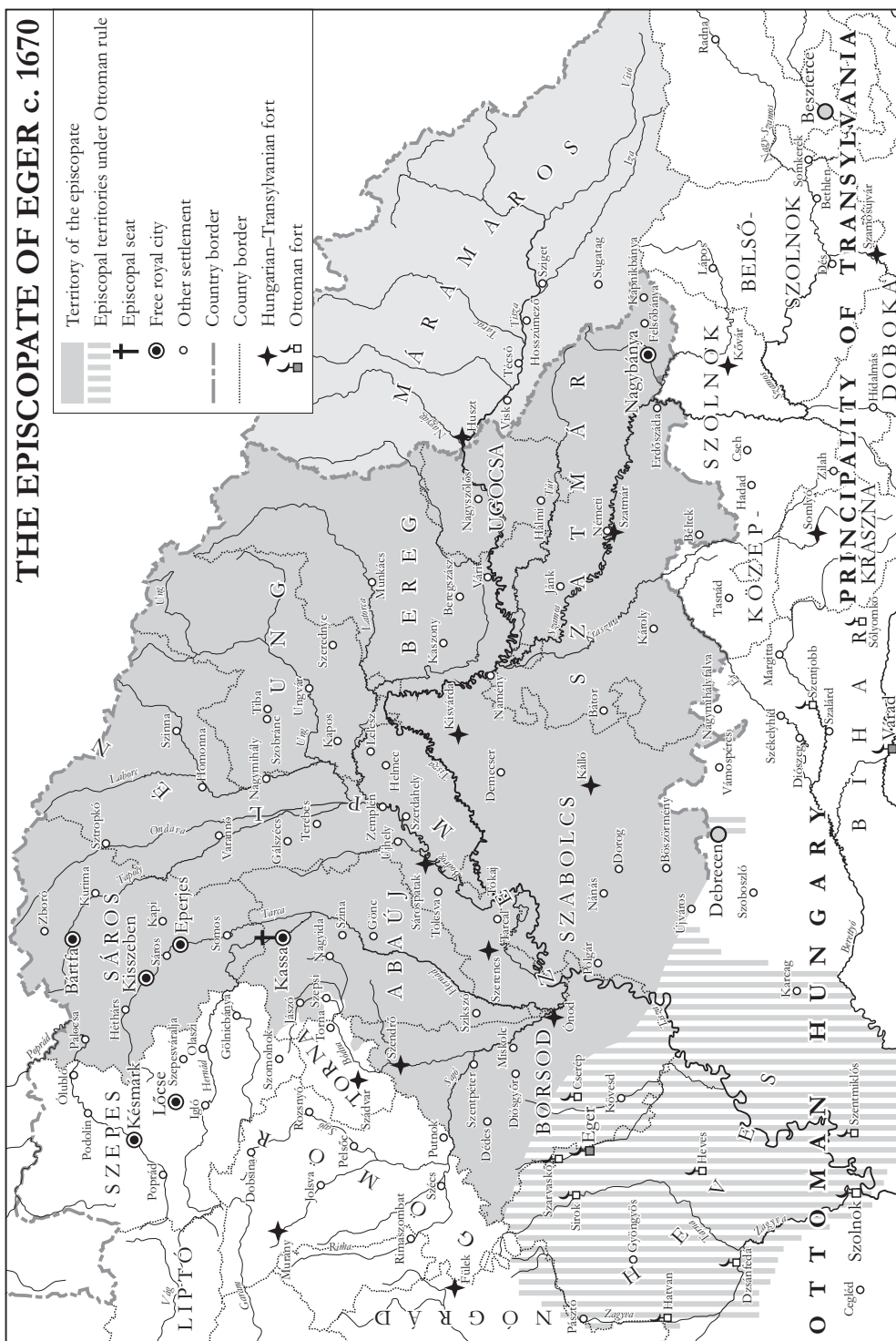
the cathedral, which had to be defended against those unnamed “others” who could claim a right to use of the cathedral’s space for themselves. The “others” constitute a constructed image of the enemy within society at large; a foe preparing to break into the space under the jurisdiction of the Church—and thus able to commandeer and seize its functions and furnishing. The renovation called for by the archbishop would renew and reinforce the sacral function and the Church jurisdiction of this space, and in doing so would also symbolize the dominance of the Catholic Church, which had returned to the city after a century-long hiatus.

The present essay examines the shifting functions of urban sacred spaces in the final third of seventeenth-century Upper Hungary. This region comprises the northeast of the historical Hungary—thirteen counties that include much of present-day eastern Slovakia, eastern Hungary, the Subcarpathian region of Ukraine, and northern Romania. With the advance of the Ottoman Empire and the consequent splitting of the Kingdom of Hungary into three parts in the mid-sixteenth century, “Upper Hungary” at the time referred to the region bordered by the Ottoman Empire, the Principality of Transylvania, and Poland. It then came under the rule of the Habsburgs, but from the start of the seventeenth century parts of it (by turns smaller and larger) or sometimes all of it came for shorter and longer periods into the possession of the princes of Transylvania, a vassal state of the Ottomans.

Since the region’s center was Kassa (present-day Košice in Slovakia), that city is among those examined in this essay. Kassa was a free royal city that from the Middle Ages onward enjoyed numerous privileges. The city’s central role in Upper Hungary was further reinforced by the fact that in the second half of the sixteenth century it became the seat of the Szepes Chamber, a regional government organ with financial and economic functions, while also being a captaincy general in the Kingdom’s military hierarchy.² After Eger fell into the Ottomans’ hands in 1596, its bishop and chapter fled to Jászó (Jasov, Slovakia), near Kassa, where it established its headquarters, and from the mid-seventeenth century it moved to Kassa.³ Beside Kassa’s role as the regional administrative,

2 The Szepes Chamber was formed in 1567 initially as an organ tasked with financial and economic matters, and by the seventeenth century it saw to political matters as well. In 1673, Vienna appointed Count Otto Ferdinand Volkra, advisor to the Royal Chamber and vice-president of the Hungarian Chamber, as administrative head of the Szepes Chamber. See also Jenő Szűcs, *A Szepesi Kamarai levéltár 1567–1813* [The Archive of the Szepes Chamber], ed. János Varga (Budapest: MOL, 1990), 85–87.

3 Péter Tusor, “Nemesi és polgári érdekvégyesítési törekvések a katolikusok és reformátusok kassai recepta religiójává válásában (A Magyar Tanács és a vallásügy 1648-ban)” [Efforts by the Nobility and the



military, and economic center, its importance as a Catholic center also grew, helped along by the founding one after another of a Jesuit college and secondary school, then an academy, and finally, a seminary.⁴ Kassa thus became a key base of Catholic expansion in Upper Hungary notwithstanding that the city's population and its leadership were overwhelmingly Lutheran.

The other major urban center examined by this essay is Nagybánya (Baia Mare in Romania). Upper Hungary's border city with the Principality of Transylvania, Nagybánya over the course of the seventeenth century came under the control of Transylvania's princes on several occasions. The last time this occurred was during the reign of György II Rákóczi, and these circumstances held firm until 1661. Although, even in the 1670s the Rákóczi family tried reacquiring Nagybánya, a key mining center, the city nominally came under Habsburg rule by the 1660s. Besides the proximity of Transylvania, its mines and its mint accounted for its significance. By around 1667 Chamber employees appeared in town, but only in 1672 did imperial troops manage to march their way in. In contrast with Kassa, Nagybánya had no Catholic tradition, its population was mostly Calvinist, though the city was also home to a small Lutheran community. Even the city's leaders were primarily from the ranks of the Reformed. In fact, during the Reformation, by the mid-sixteenth century the Catholic Church's institutional structure had collapsed in Nagybánya, to reappear only in 1674, when a Jesuit mission first comprising just one person, then two, arrived and got to work. In this city the rebuilding of Catholic institutions thus came hand in hand with the recatholicization of urban spaces.

While other examples besides Kassa and Nagybánya will naturally be raised in this essay, these two cities are particularly suitable for an examination of numerous characteristics of the shifting functions of sacred buildings during the conditions of conflict that defined this era, which were tantamount to a religious civil war. The period at issue starts with the collapse in 1670 of the Wesselényi Conspiracy by Hungarian nobles against the Habsburgs—in the wake of which the Habsburg imperial army occupied Upper Hungary, and those who had taken part in the conspiracy or were suspected of having done so were

Bourgeois to have Catholicism and Reformed Church Protestantism become the Accepted Religion in Kassa (The Hungarian Council and Religious Affairs in 1648)], *Magyar Egyháztörténeti Vázlatok – Regnum* 10, no. 1–2 (1998): 5–26.

4 István Bitskey, *Püspökök, írók, könyvtárak. Egeri főpapok irodalmi mecenatúrája a barokk korban* [Bishops, Writers, Libraries. The Literary Patronage of Eger's Leading Priests in the Baroque] (Eger: Heves Megyei Múzeumi Szervezet, 1997), 32.

subjected to prosecution and seizure of their estates. Hungary's constitution was suspended, and in 1673 a governor was appointed in the person of Johann Kaspar Ampringen, grand master of the Teutonic Order, along with a governing council (*Gubernium*). Coming hand in hand with the political transition was a violent attempt at a counter-reformation; which is to say, an attempt by the Catholic Church to restore the position it had lost in the Reformation. The period under scrutiny in this essay closes with 1699, which marked not only the end of the war against the Ottomans, but also the year in which—following the death of Eger Bishop György Fenessy—both the episcopate and Fenessy's successor, István Telekessy, returned formally to Eger, their old headquarters, which had been recaptured from the Ottomans in 1687.

Just what do we mean by “sacred space”? Two fundamental processes are requisite to the creation of the social, and thus the sacred, space. The first is spacing—that is, creating the space in its general, physical, palpable sense; the furnishing of its physical details; and adorning it with representative, symbolic value to readily enable its identification as affiliated with a particular confession. The second, synthesizing process is one that enables perception and memory formation—a process that yields the “institutionalization” of the space. The creation and institutionalization of such a space can be well understood through the example of confessionalization. Developing both an external and internal, confession-specific architectural space and furnishing it with appropriate symbols serves to create the physical framework of the sacred space. Hence the possibility of contrasting a richly ornamented, baroque Catholic church with its simpler, more puritan Protestant counterpart. And yet a social space is invariably filled by—and literally brought to life by—social activity. In the case of a Catholic church, this is manifested in the course of its consecration rituals, holy masses, and processions; and in Protestant churches through services and congregational life. All these factors also contributed to the institutionalization of these confessions in the early modern period.⁵

Above all, it was the church itself, and the space delimited by its walls, that counted as a sacred space—standing out as it did amid the overall fabric of the city, in which it played a central role even in the early modern period. Alongside religious rituals and other such activities, the sacral function of this space was reinforced by canon law, whose rules and regulations aimed in part to restrict

5 Susanne Rau and Gerd Schwerhoff, “Öffentliche Räume in der Frühen Neuzeit. Überlegungen zu Leitbegriffen und Themen eines Forschungsfeldes,” in *Zwischen Gotteshaus und Taverne. Öffentliche Räume in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. Susanne Rau et al. (Cologne–Weimar–Vienna: Böhlau, 2004), 23, 25–6.

its secular use considered as inappropriate, albeit often in vain.⁶ The key role of the physical church was further bolstered by the numerous social functions that complemented its sacred character. Besides its being a space organizing society, it conveyed a sense of social hierarchy, the hierarchy of estates; for example, in seating arrangements in its pews at regular services, in church weddings, and in funerals. As for its legal and political function, the church could be the setting for court proceedings both secular and canonical, as well as inauguration ceremonies for city officials. A church could likewise fulfill military purposes: its relatively fortified construction was suitable for the protection of not only body and soul but also assets. In sum, then, a church represented a central, urban, social space whose role was not limited merely to sacral functions.⁷

The Reformation brought about a major change in this respect, for the emergent Protestant confessions were less bound to the physical church itself: services could be held even in the open air, while the abandonment of the cult of the saints and their relics further meant that the church no longer had quite the same sacrality as it had in the Catholic sense. Later, though, in the interest of better organizing congregational life they too prioritized use of the church space itself, albeit with a new approach to the look of the interior. Comparable research in other countries of Europe has suggested that the central role of the church as physical space diminished despite this in the early modern age, since the Catholic Church sought to limit the other functions associated with the physical church.⁸ As this essay will show, this was not at all the case in late-seventeenth-century Upper Hungary, and indeed, whether it applied to the Kingdom of Hungary even in the eighteenth century is in doubt.

6 Peter Johaneč, "Konfessionen in Stadtraum," in *Formierung des konfessionellen Raumes in Ostmitteleuropa*, ed. Evelin Wetter (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008), 156–57. For a distinction between the sacred and the profane see Sarah Hamilton and Andrew Spicer, "Defining the Holy: the Delineation of Sacred Space," in *Defining the Holy. Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Sarah Hamilton et al. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 2–5.

7 Rau and Schwerhoff, "Öffentliche Räume," 34–8.

8 Regarding the development of churches' new interior spaces, see Rau and Schwerhoff, "Öffentliche Räume," 38–9; Graeme Murdock, "Pure and White: Reformed Space for Worship in Early Seventeenth-Century Hungary," in *Defining the Holy. Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Sarah Hamilton et al. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 231–50; Andrew Spicer, "Confessional Space and Identity in Central and Eastern Europe," in *Formierung des konfessionellen Raumes in Ostmitteleuropa*, ed. Evelin Wetter (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008), 336–39. For a work examining the diminishing role of central authority vis-à-vis churches and inns, see Andreas Holzem, "Kirche – Kirchhof – Gasthaus. Konflikte um öffentliche Kommunikationsräume in westfälischen Dörfern der Frühen Neuzeit," in *Zwischen Gotteshaus und Taverne. Öffentliche Räume in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. Susanne Rau et al. (Cologne–Weimar–Vienna: Böhlau, 2004), 447–60.

And yet the sacred space extended beyond the physical walls of the church itself. In this respect, the square out front was paramount, as it served architecturally to further distinguish the church from the city's surrounding structure. This space in front of the church is perhaps best conceived of as a secular space dominated by a sacred presence; it was where people entered and left the church, where crowds gathered, and where illustrious guests were welcomed before stepping inside. At the same time, this space also expanded the realm of priestly activity, as it effectively speaking broadened the church's interior, sacred space.⁹ At the same, given that it marked the border of the secular and the sacred, it was particularly vulnerable to transgressions, as was often manifested in criminal or other illicit activity—including theft, begging, brawls, and prostitution.¹⁰

The most vigorous expansion of the sacred space into the world outside itself occurred in the form of the religious procession, which bestowed secular spaces with a temporary sacrality. According to this understanding of space, the conveyance of relics and the sacrament of the altar, around a city served to purify such otherwise secular spaces of heresy. Of particular importance in this regard was the procession of Corpus Christi, whose holding or not holding allowed one confession to demonstrate its dominance over another and, consequently, often led to confessional strife.¹¹ The structure that such processions assumed made evident the shifting power relationships between various confessions, making it clear to all, for example, that a city's Catholicized leadership held a stronger role than earlier had been the case.¹²

In Hungary, it was folklorists who first began to address the matter of sacred spaces. Róbert Keményfi, who summed up his research on this front in a monograph published in 2004, has been the most prominent among them. Examining from various perspectives the means by which confessional spaces can be analyzed, he has devoted special focus to the manifestation of mental

9 Jörg Stabenow, "Verortungen, Spiegelungen. Der sakrale Innenraum als Element der städtischen Raumordnung," in *Räume der Stadt. Von der Antike bis heute*, ed. Cornelia Jöchner (Berlin: Reimer Verlag, 2008), 107–8.

10 Rau and Schwerhoff, "Öffentliche Räume," 39.

11 Spicer, "Confessional," 342.

12 Martin Scheutz, "Kaiser und Fleischhackerknecht. Städtische Fronleichnamsprozessionen und öffentlicher Raum in Niederösterreich, Wien während der Frühen Neuzeit," in *Aspekte der Religiosität in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Thomas Aigner (St. Pölten: Diözesenarchiv, 2003), 64–5.

space; which is to say, to the use of space and the perception of space as a coded, mental experience.¹³

In the realm of historical scholarship, meanwhile, recent years have seen a theoretical essay by Veronika Novák and another by András Szekeres likewise assessing the possibilities by which to examine the use of space¹⁴—with Szekeres doing so through the lens of works of Edoardo Grendi, which accorded prominence to the spatial analysis of the religious structuring of society and of religious confraternities. Szekeres, too, has emphasized that research into social space vis-à-vis Catholicism in the early modern period presents an opportunity for a “localized reading that can compare the elements of religiosity in the Baroque period and the political structuring of local communities in a more coherent manner than ever before.”¹⁵

Veronika Novák, meanwhile, opened the door to new avenues of research by widening the range of possible questions. For example, examining source materials on competing confessions facilitates a comparative analysis of their spatial perspectives. By examining borders and how these borders were crossed, she argues we can shed new light both on how these confessions stood apart from each other and on their interrelationships. The joint analysis of new counterconcepts—private and public space, sacred and secular, closed and open spaces—shall bring new results. As for the present essay, its key starting point is the premise of a sacred space that was ever shifting and used in varying ways both in the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, as well as the issue of desacralization.¹⁶

And yet the examples of sacred spaces in the early modern age are few and far between in the latest Hungarian historical scholarship. Worthy of note is György Granasztói's research in the city of Nagyszombat (Trnava in Slovakia), which examined the victory of the Catholic Church through changes in the

13 Róbert Keményfi, *Földrajzi szemlélet a néprajztudományban. Etnikai és felekezeti terek, kontaktzónák elemzési lehetőségei* [A Geographic Perspective in Folklore Studies. The Possibilities of Analyzing Ethnic and Denominational Spaces and Contact Zones] (Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 2004).

14 Veronika Novák, “A térhasználat kutatása – módszerek és lehetőségek. A társadalmi tér vizsgálata a középkori és a kora újkori városok történetében” [The Research of the Use of Space: Methods and Options. The Analysis of Social Space in the History of Medieval and Early Modern Cities], *Urbs. Magyar Várostörténeti Évkönyv* 4 (2009): 11–33; András Szekeres, “A tér tudatosulása” [The Realization of Space], in *Atelier-iskola. Tanulmányok Granasztói György tiszteletére* [The Atelier School. Essays in Honor of György Granasztói], ed. Czoch Gábor et al. (Budapest: Atelier, 2008), 89–100.

15 Szekeres, “A tér,” 99.

16 Novák, “A térhasználat,” 25.

city's structure—yielding the same local reading in the case of Nagyszombat as András Szekeres did in regard to Catholicization in the early modern age.¹⁷

A similarly forward-looking piece of scholarship was Éva Knapp and Gábor Tüskés's research into the sacral spatial structure of pilgrimage sites, which is also worthy of note for its in-depth analysis of social rituals that engendered sacred spaces—rituals that rendered such pilgrimage sites the cultic, sacral centers of their communities, with significant regional or even far wider geographic implications.¹⁸

This essay first examines the recatholicization of Protestant churches and the re-establishment of Catholic sacrality, then addresses the question of spaces desacralized during the Reformation. Next it analyzes ritual violence against churches. Finally it looks at the factors that reinforced or weakened spaces' sacral characteristics. All in all, it seeks to answer this question: how did the violent Counter-Reformation of the late-seventeenth century reshape the social use of cities' central space, that of churches?

Making Catholic Churches out of Protestant Ones

The seizure of Protestant churches and their handover to Catholics got underway in Upper Hungary in the spring of 1671—with the old Franciscan monasteries in Bártfa and Eperjes (Bardejov and Prešov in Slovakia, respectively) and the Slovak church in Lőcse (Levoča, Slovakia) among the first.¹⁹ Plans were already set for these actions by the fall of 1670, which is when János Gubasóczy, Bishop of Pécs²⁰, wrote to Esztergom Archbishop György Szelepcsényi that in Lőcse, “some empty monasteries are already being shrewdly cleaned out, so there

17 György Granasztói, *A barokk győzelme Nagyszombatban. Tér és társadalom, 1579–1711* [The Victory of the Baroque in Nagyszombat. Space and Society, 1579–1711] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2004).

18 Éva Knapp and Gábor Tüskés, “Szakrális térstruktúrák a zarándokhelyeken” [Sacral Space-Structures at Pilgrimage Sites], in *Népi vallásosság Magyarországon a 17–18. században* [Popular Religion in Hungary during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries], ed. Éva Knapp and Gábor Tüskés (Budapest: Osiris, 2001) 59–80.

19 Béla Vilmos Mihalik, “A Szepesi Kamara szerepe az 1670–1674 közötti felső-magyarországi rekatolizációban” [The Role of the Szepes Chamber in the Recatholicization of Upper-Hungary, 1670–1674], *Fons* 17 (2010): 264–6.

20 As a member of the committee of Lőcse, János Gubasóczy traveled to Upper Hungary. Invested with full authority by King Leopold I (Holy Roman Emperor, King of Hungary, and King of Bohemia) following the collapse of the Wesselényi Conspiracy, this committee investigated those nobles suspected of having taken part and oversaw the seizure of their estates, as well as the operation of the Szepes Chamber. See also: Szűcs, *A Szepesi Kamara*, 67–8.

should be constant petitions over this.”²¹ “Cleaning out” here presumably meant that the city leadership had placed these churches’ most valuable furnishings and other items under its own supervision to keep them from falling into the hands of the Catholics.

Church seizures followed a tried and tested procedure. That of the church in Szendrő in 1672 saw the Szepes Chamber provide a strikingly detailed account for its local official, István Pethő. As a representative of the governing administration, Pethő had to proceed in sync with Szendrő’s Franciscan father superior, who represented the Catholic Church. The seizure of this particular church was carried out by the German soldiers stationed there under the command of Captain Georg Wilhelm Schöning. As a sacred space, the church had to be formally reappropriated by the local Roman Catholic representative, in this case the Franciscan, albeit with the support of the Chamber representative acting on behalf of the civil administration—who was authorized to banish the Protestant pastor from the city, which itself was under the management of the Chamber as the representative of its owner, the Hungarian royal treasury. Hence, the act of retaking the church symbolized cooperation between the Catholic Church and the state, further facilitated by the German army, which in turn represented the imperial royal power.²²

Difficulties were often encountered in reappropriating churches. In the case of Szendrő, the Chamber signaled its willingness to order the church’s seizure by force: it was made clear that if a key did not turn up, a locksmith would open the door. On November 24, 1671, the door to the cathedral in Kassa, the de facto capital of Upper Hungary, was opened with the help of an axe—as the locksmith had not been successful.²³ In Nagybánya in 1674, local townspeople not only took up arms against the Chamber committee that arrived to seize Saint Stephen Church but also summoned the help of anti-Habsburg *bujdosók* (fugitives)—resistance that proved effective until put down by imperial troops arriving from Szatmár (Satu Mare in Romania).²⁴

21 Esztergomi Érseki Levéltár [Esztergom Primateal Archives], Archivum Saeculare, Acta Radicalia, Classis X. No. 196, fasc. 40, p. 24.

22 Mihalik, “A Szepesi Kamara szerepe,” 270–1.

23 Ibid., 269.

24 Béla Vilmos Mihalik, “Thon már most csak neveti Jesuita...’ Két évtized felekezeti küzdelmei Nagybányán (1674–1694)” [‘The Jesuit is Only Laughing Now...’ Two Decades of Religious Conflict in Nagybánya, 1674–1694], in *Tanulmányok Badacsonyból* [Essays from Badacsony], ed. Béla Vilmos Mihalik et al. (Budapest: FLE, 2011), 66–7.

In the wake of a seizure, it was reconsecration that ensured a church's sacral function in the Catholic sense. On November 25, 1671, a day after the reappropriation of Saint Elizabeth Cathedral in Kassa, the chapter of the Eger cathedral, with Bishop Ferenc Lénárd Szegedy in the lead, entered Saint Elizabeth Cathedral in a procession. Once the bishop had reconsecrated the church, they sang the *Te Deum*; meanwhile, German guards stationed outside welcomed the cathedral's reappropriation with canon- and gunfire.²⁵ On the occasion of the seizure of the church in Jolsva (Jelšava in Slovakia) in 1672, the parish priest led a procession into the church while singing the Litany of Loreto. The next day—the first day of Easter—the local organist was on hand to provide music for a holy mass, as were bugle players provided by a contingent of German troops from nearby Murány (Muráň, Slovakia).²⁶ This procession—culminating with the grand entry into the church and accompanied by the music and indeed the thunder of ceremonial canon fire—ensured an audiovisual sensation that simultaneously symbolized the religious mission and the power of the Catholic Church.

A church's sacrality was likewise symbolized by its furnishings, not least its array of liturgical objects. As for the latter, in the wake of reappropriation the most salient challenge to refurnishing churches was that Protestant city leaders often delayed the return of such objects or outright hid them. In the market town of Gönc (present-day northern Hungary) the new parish priest demanded that city officials return the church's liturgical objects, but the officials turned over only the chalices, vestments, and rugs in their official inventory, claiming that the rest of the objects being sought had either been previously taken from them or that they didn't know about them to begin with.²⁷ In Kassa in 1672, the city's new, Catholic judge, János Fodor, ordered an investigation to determine whether the silver-gilt chalices local Lutheran ministers used in communions had perhaps originated in the treasury of the cathedral that had been reappropriated in the fall of 1671.²⁸ For his part, the parish priest in Eperjes, Augustin Langner, complained that city officials disregarded the Chamber's decree and ignored the matter of the missing monstrance. In their defense, city officials denied that

25 Gyula Pauler, *Wesselényi Ferenc nádor és társainak összeesküvése, 1664–1671* [The Conspiracy of Palatin Ferenc Wesselényi and His Associates], vol. 2 (Budapest: MTA, 1876), 422–3.

26 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (MNL OL) [Hungarian National Archive], Szepesi Kamara Levéltára [Archive of the Szepes Chamber], E254, Repraesentationes, informationes et instantiae, fasc. 59, April 1673, no. 24, April 7, 1673, Murány. Letter of Michael Angelo Jacquemod.

27 Ibid., fasc. 55, February 1672, no. 36, January 11, 1672, Gönc. Letter of the people of Gönc.

28 Ibid., fasc. 56, June 1672, no. 62, June 22, 1672, Kassa. Letter of János Fodor.

neglect accounted for their lack of attention to the matter, citing instead the dire poverty they were meanwhile dealing with.²⁹

Chamber records provide but fragmentary data on how churches were furnished or redesigned. In January 1675, Protestants in Szatmár penned a letter requesting permission to keep their wooden church, explaining that it had never been in Catholic hands to begin with. This was evident from its architectural style and its foundations, they insisted, noting that it looked much more like a simple, modest home than a church. They observed that while it was suitable for preaching, for sermons, it was hardly a place to construct an elaborate altar.³⁰ This letter amply reflects one key difference between Protestant and Catholic conceptions of sacred space. As previously noted, early Protestant confessions were not firmly bound to specific spaces. They gave interior makeovers to those churches they appropriated from Catholics, and diverged markedly from the architectural features of Catholic religious buildings when constructing new churches for themselves. The relative simplicity and modest nature of Protestant church buildings stemmed in part from a difference in religious outlook, and perhaps also in part from disparities in material wealth.

The number and design of altars comprised yet another fundamental distinction of Catholic sacred spaces. In Gönc, the parish priest György Horváth sought to have the town fund a new altar, requesting money to purchase boards and nails, as well as compensation for a carver and painter. The city denied the request, advising him to instead devote the sexton's salary to this end, to which Horváth replied that the sexton didn't have any salary to begin with.³¹ In the Jesuit church in Eperjes, in the presence of Ferenc Lénárd Szegedy, bishop of Eger, the main altar was dedicated to the Immaculate Virgin Mary; and as for the two side altars, one was dedicated to Saint Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, and the other to Saint Francis Borgia.³² By 1686, meanwhile, two new altars were all but complete in the Jesuits' church in Kassa—the Holy Trinity Altar and an altar dedicated to the Assumption of Mary—thanks mainly to the support of Chamber councilor Zsigmond Holló.³³

29 Ibid., fasc. 60, July 1673, no. 188, July 29, 1673, Eperjes. Letter of the judge and senate of Eperjes.

30 Ibid., fasc. 67, January 1675, no. 102, January 4, 1675, Szatmár. Letter of the judge and the senate of Szatmár to the Szepes Chamber.

31 Ibid., fasc. 56, April 1672, no. 37, April 14, 1672, Gönc. The letter of the people of Gönc to the Szepes Chamber.

32 Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (ÖNB), Handschriftensammlung, vol. 12.224, anno 1673, fol. 162v.

33 Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI), Austria, vol. 147, anno 1686, fol. 84v–85r.

Notwithstanding the dearth of information as to the specifics of churches' interior redesign in the territory of the Eger diocese during the period, what we do know about—dedication ceremonies, the reacquisition of necessary liturgical objects, and the building of altars—points unequivocally to the re-establishment of the sacrality of the church space in the Catholic sense. This serves also to explain why these elements keep recurring in historical source materials—sources from which it is further clear that not only the Catholic Church, but also government organs devoted considerable efforts to ensuring the recatholicization of sacred spaces by such means. And yet crude violations of sacred spaces accompanied flare-ups of religious strife at the end of the seventeenth century, as the destruction of devotional objects, altars, paintings, icons, and statues, as well as the ransacking of churches came increasingly to symbolize victory over the competing confession. The next section thus briefly addresses the ritual desecration of churches.

Ritual Desecration of Churches

The onslaught of attacks carried out by Kuruc rebels after the collapse of the Wesselényi Conspiracy only exacerbated the poorly furnished condition of churches. (The rebels' ranks comprised members of the lower nobility who had turned fugitives after the conspiracy's end and organized an army. They were called *bujdosók* or “fugitives,” and later on Kuruc.) These attacks originated from territories bordering Upper Hungary that were under the control of Transylvania and of the Ottomans. Starting with the first major incursion, in the fall of 1672,³⁴ conditions that amounted to an ongoing civil war prevailed in Upper Hungary for nearly a decade-and-a-half. The most serious and sustained such episode was represented by the anti-Habsburg uprising led by Count Imre Thököly, which peaked from 1682 to 1685 with his recognition by the Ottomans as vassal king of Upper Hungary.

In the course of these attacks there occurred numerous instances of what can best be understood as the ritual desecration of churches. In early October 1672, the Calvinists attacked the Franciscan monastery in Homonna (Humenné in Slovakia), chasing down and robbing the fleeing priests.³⁵ In the fall of 1677,

34 Gyula Pauler, “A bujdosók támadása 1672-ben” [The Attack of the Fugitives in 1672], *Századok* 3 (1869): 1–16, 85–97, 166–78.

35 MNL OL, E254, fasc. 62, November 1673, no. 47, November 15, 1673, Homonna. Letter of the Franciscans of Homonna.

forces led by Pál Wesselényi occupied Nagybánya, forcing the Jesuit priests to escape with little but the skin on their backs. Residents of Nagybánya then defiled the images of saints, broke the cross, and smashed in the windows. Amid scornful remarks and swearing, locals also tore the new altars out of the Saint Martin Church, tossing them onto the square out front before publicly burning them.³⁶ In Kisszeben (Sabinov, Slovakia), locals scattered the consecrated hosts, broke the holy water font, and cut the priest's vestments to pieces.³⁷ These actions, too, were punctuated by verbal insults, and the Catholics of Nagymihály (Michalovce, Slovakia) were taunted by the rebels thus: "Mary's fled to Homonna, leaving the papists of Nagymihály with no one to save them."³⁸

When troops led by Imre Thököly captured Kassa on August 15, 1682, they took chalices, patens, and other valuable objects, including silver, from the Jesuits, whom they chased out of town. The priests left behind their entire library and a well equipped apothecary, not to mention the church containing seven chalices with accompanying patens, two ciboriums for holding wafers, a monstrance, and four silver candleholders; the statue of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, which had been a gift from Ferenc I Rákóczi, Prince of Transylvania; the prince's silver epitaph; and the gilded main altar adorned with paintings.³⁹ Thököly's troops plundered the treasury of Kassa's main cathedral in similar fashion—cashing in a portion of the silver, pearls, and ornaments. They had a goldsmith melt down a large silver monstrance into tiny silver sheets, and they removed the inlaid gems from a gold cross. They returned a portion of the remaining valuables to the main cathedral during the siege by the imperial forces, while entrusting the rest to the sexton. In similar fashion they began to disburse the contents of the library in Saint Elizabeth Cathedral. It was from there, for example, that Lutheran minister János Asbóth borrowed an eleven-volume concordance of the Holy Scripture.⁴⁰

36 MNL OL, Szepesi Kamara Levéltára, E266, Commissio Breuneriana, fasc. 8, December 1689, fol. 56–57, 5 December 1689.

37 Georg B. Michels, "The Counter-Reformation and the 1672 Kuruc Revolution," in *Friars, Nobles and Burgers—Sermons, Images and Prints. Studies of Culture and Society in Early-Modern Europe, In Memoriam István György Táth*, ed. Jaroslav Miller et al. (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2010), 113.

38 MNL OL, E254, fasc. 58, November 1672, no. 97, November 22, 1672, Redmecz. Letter of István Nagymihályi.

39 ÖNB, Handschriftensammlung, vol. 12.226, anno 1682, fol. 91–2.

40 MNL OL, Mikrofilm Gyűjtemény [Collection of Microfilms], no. 1806, Egri Káptalan Levéltára [Eger Chapter Archives], Protocollum extraseriale, vol. AI, no. 756, November 18, 1685, fol. 524v–525r, 528r.

Such aggressive actions were not limited to the churches themselves, but also targeted the priesthood. In the village of Jernye (Jarovnice, Slovakia), the fugitives stripped the parish priest naked, flogged him, and dragged him down the main road before then taking him away. His counterpart in Kisszeben tried hiding, but in vain: on finding him the fugitives beat him until he lost consciousness, cut off his hair, and to really rub in the ridicule, led him naked into the cathedral, where he was forced to renounce the Catholic faith.⁴¹

Pillaging and ritual violence were equally part and parcel of these attacks. The burning of altars signified holy purification, and the desecration of religious objects reinforced the border between the sacred and the secular, with defiled objects winding up outside the sacred space of the given confession. Participants in the ritual desecration of churches assumed the role of church and secular officials when, in defense of given religious doctrines, they acted in what they perceived as in the interest of religious purification.⁴² These ritual actions targeted those fundamental elements of Catholicism that most saliently distinguished that confession from its Protestant counterparts: saints, images of the Virgin Mary, and altars. And yet among Catholics, memories of such violent acts gradually faded as rituals on their other side of the divide, from consecration to masses, gathered pace anew. The situation was similar in the case of spaces previously ascribed with sacral functions that, since the Reformation, had been used for secular purposes, and which the next section will examine.

Restoring the Sacral Functions of Desacralized Spaces

Particularly striking are those instances in which attempts were made to bestow sacral functions to those spaces that had lost them in the wake of the Reformation. Now back on the scene, the Catholic Church demanded the return of such buildings, and it sought to restore their earlier functions by both rearranging the spaces and re-establishing the rituals held within them. Let us consider two examples that illuminate this process.

The reappropriation of Saint Nicholas Church in Nagybánya and the restoration of its sacral functions occurred in a relatively short span of time. The church had presumably been built at the start of the fifteenth century as part of Nagybánya burgher János Omechin's undertaking to create a foundation to

41 Michels, "The Counter-Reformation," 113.

42 Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France," *Past & Present* 59 (1973): 83, 90.

establish a city hospital. By the end of the seventeenth century this foundation also came into the possession of Giródtótfalu (Tăuții de Sus in Romania), a mill close to Nagybánya, as well as a vineyard hill. The lavish benefice must have been a key factor in the decision in 1674 by the Jesuit mission in Nagybánya to acquire Saint Nicholas Church first even though it was the smallest among the three churches in town. Historical records repeatedly refer to it as a “chapel,” in fact. Another reason may have been that this Protestant city had not used the building for religious functions. The larger Protestant confession locally, the Reformed Church, had long before come into possession of Saint Stephen Cathedral, while the Lutherans had gotten Saint Martin’s Church. All three churches were located in the city center—Saint Martin’s and Saint Stephen’s beside the main square, and Saint Nicholas near Little Market Square (Kispiac tér) not far from the other two.

Until 1674, Saint Nicholas Church had been used as the city stables, and in vain had the Szepes Chamber’s local representatives asked for its return; for city officials did not want to hand over the associated hospital and relinquish their claim to the funds that came with it. Hence they even sabotaged the cleaning of the church: On June 23, 1674, city bailiff István Jarossy informed the Chamber that the locals had even left their billy goats in there.⁴³ And yet the Chamber had already ordered a month earlier that the church’s roof be repaired.⁴⁴ István Jarossy and officials from the mint in the city had even looked into getting the suitable shingles for the job, but only in August did the church again come into the Catholics’ possession.⁴⁵

The Chamber demanded that since the city had previously allowed those from Giródtótfalu to raze the church’s sacristy, it should now be rebuilt at city expense and that the church itself be renovated. They practically ordered city leaders to account for and return the church’s onetime collection of devotional and liturgical objects.⁴⁶ The city in turn denied having authorized the sacristy’s destruction; its officials claimed ignorance as to the fate of liturgical objects, which, they said, had been lost in the conflict between János Szapolyai (1487–1540) and Archduke Ferdinand I (1503–1564), both of whom had claimed the title of King of Hungary.⁴⁷ Even at the end of December 1674, the city denied

43 MNL OL, E254, fasc. 64, June 1674, no. 52, June 23, 1674, Nagybánya. Letter of István Jarossy.

44 MNL OL, Szepesi Kamara Levéltára, E244, Minutae, fasc. 36, May 1674, fol. 168, May 12, 1674.

45 Mihalik, “Ihon már most,” 64–65.

46 MNL OL, E244, fasc. 36, July 1674, fol. 31, July 10, 1674.

47 Mihalik, “Ihon már most,” 65.

having neglected the renovation of the church.⁴⁸ In its letter to the Chamber of Hungary, the Szepes Chamber emphasized that Saint Nicholas Church, the hospital, and the foundation had been appropriated because the city had used them not in accord with its onetime privileges but for secular purposes.⁴⁹

Renovation of Saint Nicholas Church dragged on for months, since “purifying” it—removing the traces of its secular uses, that is—took time. In September 1674 the Chamber asked Habsburg general Paris von Spankau to have the armaments stored there moved to Szatmár.⁵⁰ More details about the renovation are to be had from a letter sent in 1677 by the Jesuit parish priest, Péter Gödy, to the Austrian provincial superior of the order who oversaw the region. According to this letter, the roof had been replaced, a new steeple had been built, a gilded cross had been placed on the church, and the vaulted sacristy had been rebuilt from the ground up. Inside, a new choir box had been built, as had a new pulpit, and the walls had been whitewashed and otherwise renovated. The cost came to a hefty sum, 671 forints. Four months after his induction Gödy could finally hold mass in the church; this, after doing so in a private home up to that point.⁵¹

Hence, this space—this church that had been used as a stables in this overwhelmingly Protestant city—now reassumed its sacral functions. Not only had it been renovated and furnished with clearly visible Catholic symbols (a gilded cross, a new steeple, and a redesigned interior), but from December 1674 this space also became newly sacred by the social activity that took place there—namely, Catholic ceremonies.

A similar process unfolded in the case of the Dominican Church in Kassa. A huge fire broke out in that city on August 22, 1674, destroying 155 houses and the city granary.⁵² The granary buildings had been none other than those comprising the earlier Dominican monastery and church. The Dominican order had left Kassa in 1556, likewise after a fire. In 1578, King Rudolph I had granted the abandoned church to the city for use as a granary on the condition that it be

48 Ibid., 66; MNL OL, E254, fasc. 66, December 1674, no. 60, December 31, 1674. Letter of the Magistrate of Nagybánya.

49 MNL OL, E244, fasc. 37, September 1674, fol. 22, September 12, 1674.

50 Ibid., fasc. 37, September 1674, fol. 204, September 1, 1674.

51 MNL OL, Magyar Kamara Archivuma [Archive of the Hungarian Chamber], E152, Acta Jesuitica, Registrata 38, fasc. 1. No. 121, July 20, 1677.

52 Béla Wick, *Kassa története és műemlékei* [The History and Monuments of Kassa] (Kassa: Wiko, 1941), 131–32.

given back to the monks if they return.⁵³ For the next century the church was thus used as a granary, while apartments, houses, and stables, were built on the monastery ruins. But in 1649 the Dominicans' *generalis commissarius* in Hungary, Eustachius de Brixia, issued a formal protest that the city was using the buildings and the attendant property for its own ends.⁵⁴

After the fire of 1674, the buildings were placed under the management of the treasury and a ban was imposed on all private construction there. The church had been desecrated by a most unusual means: the apartments that had been built from the ruins of the adjoining monastery had long seen their sewage diverted into the church.⁵⁵ On September 12, 1674, Count Otto Ferdinand Volkra, administrator of the Szepes Chamber, signed a contract with master builder Alessandro Canneval, and a couple of days later, another contract with carpenter Paul Hornstein. While the fire had collapsed the church's main interior wall and weakened its arches to the point where building on top of them was no longer feasible, the exterior walls remained in relatively good condition. Plans called for the nave to be turned into a granary, while the sanctuary was to be rebuilt as a smaller church. Even Ferenc Lénárd Szegedy, Bishop of Eger, agreed to this; General Paris von Spankau likewise approved.⁵⁶ As for the royal court in Vienna, it assented not only to the building of the new church but also to turning the former monastery into a hospital or else for rebuilding it in line with another religious use.⁵⁷ The granary was completed, but it is unclear whether the church was indeed rebuilt.

In December 1674 the Dominican order signaled its interest in reacquiring the church and monastery in Kassa, but to no avail.⁵⁸ In 1680, even a royal decree to this effect proved to be in vain, almost certainly on account of the attack by the forces led by Imre Thököly.⁵⁹ The Dominican order finally returned to

53 Ibid., 373–74.

54 Béla Wick, *Adatok a kassai domonkosok történetéhez* [Notes on the History of the Dominicans in Kassa] (Kassa: Kereskedelmi és Ipari Könyvnyomda, n.d. [1932]), 21, 23.

55 Wick, *Adatok*, 25.

56 Österreichische Staatsarchiv (ÖStA), Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv (FHKa), Hoffinanz Ungarn (HFU), r.Nr. t 249, November 1674, fol. 272–273, 279–280, September 12 and 20, 1674.

57 ÖStA, FHKa, HFU, r.Nr. 249, November 1674, fol. 267, 294–297, October 24, 1674 and November 16, 1674.

58 István Szabó, “Protestáns egyháztörténeti adatok az 1670–1681. évekből a bécsi hadiléváltárból” [Protestant Church Historical Sources from the Viennese Kriegsarchiv, 1670–1681], *Egyháztörténet* 2 (1959): 325.

59 MNL OL, E250, fasc. 58, nr. 45, November 4, 1680. The Hungarian Chamber instructed the Szepes Chamber to return the monastery minus its assets and furnishings.

Kassa only at the end of the century when, on December 16, 1697, Leopold I—Holy Roman Emperor, King of Hungary, and King of Bohemia—authorized its return along with that of its benefices (including the property and income deriving from them) and their estates.⁶⁰ The Chamber's support was also vital to restoring the religious function of the Dominican church, though it is worthy of note that the proposal was to divide the church space into a church on the one hand and a granary on the other, which would have preserved a secular use of the space.

The situation was similar in the case of the Franciscan church in Kassa, which had been used partly as an arsenal while the monks were compelled to live under one roof in the adjoining monastery with imperial troops. Add to this that pending the reappropriation of Saint Elizabeth Cathedral, the members of the cathedral chapter of Eger meanwhile held mass there.⁶¹

The shifting use of such spaces in the course of the Counter-Reformation therefore manifested itself not only in the recatholicization of Protestant churches, but also in the restoration of the earlier functions of spaces desacralized in the Reformation and since used for secular purposes. It was in the course of Catholic ceremonies and liturgy that these spaces reacquired their genuine sacrality and thus wove their way back into the fabric of a given city's religious life.

Social Practices that Engendered Sacred Spaces

This section provides an overview of those practices and rituals (including ones rooted in Catholic worship) on the part of the broader urban society that helped to further “institutionalize” the sacred. While available sources tend to give accounts of those activities that violated the sacrality, even these reflect typical and atypical acts linked to sacred spaces.

The most important activity in this respect was participation in holy masses. A stellar example is the market town of Gönc, whose Reformed inhabitants were reluctant indeed to participate in Catholic masses. Quoting Saint Paul's letter to the Romans, “*Ex auditu provenit fides*”—Faith comes by hearing—the Chamber consequently ordered the local bailiff, István Berdóczy, to compel the residents to take part. Those who failed to attend masses were to be fined

60 Wick, *Adatok*, 26.

61 Béla Wick, *Szent Ferenc rendjének története Kassán* [The History of the Franciscan Order in Kassa] (Budapest: Múzeum Antikvárium, 2005), 45–51.

twelve forints. In their defense, the town's Reformed residents explained that their neglect of masses was "the result of a change in teaching which, being old, that cannot get accustomed to anymore" To this the Chamber replied, "Hold onto that which you are happy to hear, our friends, and let pass by your ears that which you are not."⁶² The Chamber regarded it as especially important that town officials should show a good example by themselves attending mass. Hence they were particularly subject to reprimands if they did not, as in the case of Gönc.⁶³

With a dearth of concrete evidence, we are left only to assume that seventeenth-century Upper Hungary saw transgressions of the sort among the Catholics that were to occur in the mid-eighteenth century in the Jász region of present-day central Hungary. In the town of Jászapáti during that later era, parishioners were known to chatter and chortle during masses. In Jászberény, a spate of scandalous incidents persuaded the parish priest to suspend processions, while in Jászládány younger folk refused to carry the processional flag.⁶⁴ Indeed, unsuitable behavior on the part of parishioners was apt to violate the sacred quality that masses and processions bestowed upon spaces.

Likewise important were the sacraments, especially baptism. For example, the authorities sought to prevent Protestants from having their own pastor or teacher baptize a child, thus circumventing the services of the parish priest. In Nagybánya in 1675, a fine of twenty imperial thalers was imposed on anyone who dared slip away to a neighboring village to have a child baptized or to get married in secret. People were instead required to have such rituals conducted by the Jesuits who led the Nagybánya parish.⁶⁵

Indeed, it was common for Protestants barred from practicing their religion locally to secretly see to their religious needs in neighboring communities and suburbs. As Catholics exerted control over the central spaces of the city, in numerous bi- or multi-confessional cities and towns, minority religions became unable to remain part of the city's landscape, with the faithful forced to mobility.⁶⁶ And yet Protestants, not as bound as Catholics to the physical church as a sacred space, could maintain their congregational lives even in private homes or other secular spaces. This was particularly true after the enacting of laws

62 MNL OL, E254, fasc. 55, February 1672, no. 36, February 11, 1672. Letter of the people of Gönc; MNL OL, E244, fasc. 29, February 1672, fol. 39, February 14, 1672.

63 MNL OL, E244, fasc. 30, July 1672, fol. 86, July 6, 1672.

64 Béla Vilmos Mihalik, "Parish Priests and Communities in the Diocese of Eger in the Mid-Eighteenth Century," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Gesellschaft zur Erforschung des 18. Jahrhunderts* 26 (2011): 136.

65 MNL OL, E244, fasc. 38, January 1675, fol. 180, January 15, 1675.

66 Spicer, "Confessional Space," 341.

on religion at the 1681 Diet of Hungary held in Sopron. In the summer of 1682, Kisszeben resident István Szirmay provided space in his own home for a minister to conduct Protestant services, and similar efforts were uncovered among Protestants in Kassa.⁶⁷ In the second half of the 1680s, the tendency for Protestants to be edged out of city and town centers was reinforced more formally as the authorities granted them plots of land for church-building that were situated outside city and town walls. In Kassa, for example, 1687 saw a royal committee led by Count István Csáky designate a territory outside the city walls for the Protestants where they could build a church, a parsonage and a school.⁶⁸

A less common phenomenon was the temporary conversion of a bourgeois home into a Catholic sacred space. On March 7, 1674, the first representative of the Jesuit mission in Nagybánya, Father Bálint Balogh, found accommodation only in the home of a Greek Orthodox resident in this otherwise hostile city. Soon he was able to move into a private home on the main square that the Chamber had earlier confiscated.⁶⁹ This was probably the former residence of a prominent Lutheran family, the Proczners, judging from the fact that it was there that Balogh's successor, Péter Gödy, was induced as the parish priest.⁷⁰ So too it was there that Gödy presumably held mass until December 1674, after which he continued to do so in the newly renovated Saint Nicholas Church.⁷¹ The Jesuit yearbook from the time allows for a microanalysis of this shifting use of space. The city's Protestant ministers and residents had observed even Balogh's activities with suspicion, doing everything they could to restrict them to the Greek Orthodox home he both lived in and held mass in. And yet Balogh had held his first masses there with the windows wide open—meaning that the lovely songs accompanying the services could be heard loud and clear by many in nearby homes and on the streets alike. By Easter he was already based on the main square, and the musical mass with preaching drew a large crowd indeed—with “approving murmurs,” according to the Jesuit yearbook.⁷²

Processions expanded the range of sacred space even more. Symbolizing the organizational might of the local community—and, depending on turnout, its unity—they were tailor-made to legitimize the pro-Catholic religious and

67 MNL OL, E254, fasc. 91, March 1682, no. 12, March 1, 1682, Eperjes. Letter of General Karl Strasoldo.

68 Wick, *Kassa története*, 140.

69 Mihalik, “Ihon már most,” 64.

70 MNL OL, E254, fasc. 65, August 1674, no. 51, August 21, 1674. Letter of István Jarossy.

71 MNL OL, E152, Registrata 38., fasc. 1, no. 121, July 20, 1677.

72 ÖNB, Handschriftensammlung, vol. 12.224, anno 1674, fol. 192r-v.

political changes that had taken place. In 1677 Kassa judge György Hoffmann summoned the city's guild masters. Citing a decree by the king, he urged them to take part in the upcoming Corpus Christi procession along with guild members. The guild masters resisted. Notwithstanding the fines they faced, their religion, their consciences would not allow them to participate.⁷³ Nor were they keen on having their attendance strengthen the position of the city administration, which had been stacked with Catholics in the early 1670s.

Even the induction of new city officials underwent a makeover, with the ceremony now firmly embedded in Catholic traditions. The accompanying mayoral oath took place in a Catholic church or parsonage, with the city's prominent Lutherans obliged to attend. A similar innovation was the procession from city hall to the church, a decidedly public demonstration of the transfer of power.⁷⁴

As with Catholic religious life in general in the early modern age, religious societies played an enormous role in processions. The membership ranks of such societies embraced a wide swathe of society in general, thus serving as a key integrating force—and by virtue of this they contributed notably to the organization of the developing sacred space in cities and towns.⁷⁵ In March 1678 the Kassa-based Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception of Blessed Virgin Mary invited the leaders of the Szepes Chamber to partake in a flagellant procession to be held on Good Friday, writing that they sought to convey the suffering and passion of the savior.⁷⁶ The Jesuits and the Franciscans played a key role in the life of religious societies in Kassa, with confraternities even visiting each other's celebrations. The social activities that such societies encompassed pervaded a city's spaces; their celebrations saw churches decorated and processions held. On the main holiday of the Agoniae Christi society in Kassa, two Sundays before Easter (Black Sunday), a procession led from Saint

73 MNL OL, Mikrofilmgyűjtemény, no. 1858, Egri Káptalan Levéltára, Protocollum seriale, vol. R, no. 386.

74 István H. Németh, "Az önigazgatás és állami felügyelet szimbólumai a magyarországi szabad királyi városokban" [Symbols of Self-Rule and State Control in Hungary's Free Royal Cities], in "Ez világ, mint egy kert..." *Tanulmányok Galavics Géza tiszteletére* [This World is like a Garden... Essays in Honor of Géza Galavics], ed. Bubryák Orsolya (Budapest: Gondolat–MTA Művészettörténeti Kutatóintézet, 2010), 59.

75 Antal Molnár, *Mezőváros és katolicizmus. Katolikus egyház az egri püspökség bódoltsági területein a 17. században* [Market Towns and Catholicism: The Catholic Church in the Territory of the Diocese of Eger under Ottoman Occupation in the Seventeenth Century] (Budapest: METEM, 2005), 125.

76 MNL OL, E254, fasc. 77, March 1678, no. 43, March 28, 1678, Kassa. Letter of the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception of Blessed Virgin Mary.

Elizabeth cathedral to the Jesuit church replete with a processional flag, bell-ringing, trumpet-playing, and drumming. After the ceremony they returned in a festive procession to the cathedral.⁷⁷

Conclusion

The examples of Kassa and Nagybánya, as well as those of the other communities in Upper Hungary discussed in this essay, serve to underscore the earlier point that buildings were readily identifiable as belonging to a particular confession precisely by virtue of their being suitably designed to reflect that confession's given architectural precepts and being furnished with its symbols. And yet it was the wealth of social activity—cults of adoration and a whole array of rituals—that bestowed a space with the genuine essence of the sacral function, shaping that space in its own image. Numerous other functions could also be at work, either complementing or else working against the effect of the sacrality. Secular uses injected the economic and military dimensions of city life into spaces previously invested chiefly with a sacral function. This did not mean, however, that the sacral function was forever lost, for it could be restored in part or in whole through public authorization and confessional rituals. Yes, the sacred space could be recreated in constructed, physical reality.

And yet the sacred space was likewise the inspiration for, and the target of, ritual violence ensuing from confessional conflicts. As Catholic priests were sent packing with the Reformation, their churches underwent radical interior makeovers in line with Protestant thinking, aimed in part at erasing the marks of Catholic sacral functions. This could include the violent, ritual desecration or destruction of those furnishings perceived to be characteristic of Catholic churches—most notably, images and statues of the Virgin Mary and saints, altars, and liturgical objects.⁷⁸ In my assessment such violent acts, which also “channeled” tensions, served all the more to reinforce the sacred space as synonymous with the city center, notwithstanding German research that has

77 Éva Knapp and Gábor Tüskés, “Társulatok, rekatolizáció és társadalmi átalakulás: a kassai példa” [Confraternities, Recatholization, and Social Transformation: the Example of Kassa], in Éva Knapp and Gábor Tüskés, *Népi vallásosság Magyarországon a 17–18. században* [Popular Religion in Hungary during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries] (Budapest: Osiris, 2001), 298–319.

78 Davies, “The Rites of Violence,” 51–91. This major work by Davies inspired numerous case studies that raised analogous examples; see *Ritual and Violence: Natalie Zemon Davis and Early Modern France*, ed. Graeme Murdock, Penny Roberts and Andrew Spicer. Past & Present Supplement 7 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

suggested the opposite trend in this era. In fact, our examples show that the role of city halls was on the wane as regarded the inauguration of city officials while that of parish churches was on the rise.⁷⁹

Even alongside the violence, however, signs of peaceful coexistence were also in sharp relief. In Bártfa, for example, the local government's Protestant leaders in 1686 authorized the church anniversary feast, even ringing the town bells to mark the occasion.⁸⁰ In Jászberény, even after his own congregation had seen its church destroyed, the Reformed minister often had lunch with the Catholic parish priest, though Protestantism was theoretically banned.⁸¹ Beyond its interconfessional coexistence, this region was likewise characterized by ethnic diversity. After the recapture of Eger from the Ottomans in 1687, Hungarians, Rascians (Serbs), and Germans lived alongside each other in this ancient episcopal see—hence a confessional mix that included Roman Catholics, Reformed Church members, Lutherans, and Eastern Orthodox. Muslim converts to Catholicism, the so-called “new Christians” who remained behind comprised yet another major community. The monastic orders that settled here, and the ensuing development of new sacred spaces, likewise played a huge role in the integration of the city's diverse ethnic and religious groups.

The Catholic Church became one of the major actors of consolidation in Hungary during its years of civil war, the wars to retake Hungary from the Turks, and the years that followed. It was precisely for this reason, then, that Catholic sacred spaces and, more generally, changes in the use of space came simultaneously to symbolize the “glorious” return of the Church and to serve the cause of consolidation. Although Protestant denominations were tolerated, they were squeezed out of city centers. Protestant sacrality did, then, continue to make its spatial mark on cities, only in a different form, now on the periphery.

79 A different sort of conflict between sacred space and the representative space of authority emerged in Nagybánya at the end of the 1680s, when word had it that city hall was to be appropriated for use as a parish church. In an effort to avert this, residents scratched medieval depictions of the apostles off its walls.

80 MNL OL, E254, fasc. 99, March 1686, no. 171, March 12, 1686, Bártfa. Letter of János Szegedy.

81 EÉL, Archivum Vetus, no. 647/3, Jászberény, no. 1, April 9, 1718.

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